Larry Leffler

F

MY OWN WORK

This is my work; my blessing, not my doom;
Let me do my work from day to day
  In field or forest, at the desk or loom,
  In roaring market-place or tranquil room;
Let me but find it in my heart to say,
  When vagrant wishes beckon me astray,
  "This is my work; my blessing, not my doom;
Of all who live, I am the only one by whom
The work can best be done in the right way."

Then shall I see it not too great, nor small,
  To suit my spirit and to prove my powers;
Then shall I cheerful greet the laboring hours,
And cheerful turn, when the long shadows fall
  At eventide, to play and love and rest,
Because I know for me my work is best.

-Henry Van Dyke

M. Reeves.
1919
Ashland Ky.

With Love to Fawoo.
Mabr.

F

Dec. 25-1919.

GOD'S FAITH IN MAN

WORKS BY

FREDERICK F. SHANNON

God's Faith in Man

12mo, cloth .....net $1.25

"Breathes the great essential elements of Christianity, faith, love, hope, and the all-sufficiency of the Christ to save the world."

—*Methodist Quarterly Review.*

The Breath in the Winds

12mo, cloth .....net $1.25

"The spirit of God breathes through all the pages. Sermons that are a great pleasure and an uplift to read."—*Herald and Presbyter.*

The Enchanted Universe

12mo, cloth .....net $1.25

"Sound, sympathetic, brilliant, Dr. Shannon's sermons might serve as models to the new generation. They are the ministries of a physician who has found in the gospel the sovereign remedy."

—*The Continent.*

The New Personality

12mo, cloth .....net $1.25

"There is a good deal of helpful illustration. They give evidence of careful study, of wide reading, and of earnest conviction. The reading of this book will prove especially helpful and stimulating to ministers just taking up their work."

—*United Presbyterian.*

The Soul's Atlas

12mo, cloth .....net $1.25

"In the broadest and best sense, Mr. Shannon brings a vital message of clear and positive thinking, expressed in beautiful and appropriate terms. He is one of the most accomplished and best preachers of the younger generation."

—*Dr. S. Parkes Cadman.*

GOD'S FAITH IN MAN

AND OTHER SERMONS

BY

FREDERICK F. SHANNON

Pastor of the Reformed Church-on-the-Heights,
Brooklyn

*Author of "The Soul's Atlas," "The New Personality,"
"The Enchanted Universe,"
"The Breath in the Winds," etc.*

NEW YORK CHICAGO

Fleming H. Revell Company

LONDON AND EDINBURGH

Copyright, 1919, by
FLEMING H. REVELL COMPANY

Printed in United States of America.

New York: 158 Fifth Avenue
Chicago: 17 North Wabash Ave.
London: 21 Paternoster Square
Edinburgh: 75 Princes Street

To

MR. and MRS. SAMUEL ROWLAND.

My Dear Friends:

The Reformed Church-on-the-Heights is very near and dear to you, and has been throughout your whole lives. Precious memories attach to our beautiful and beloved sanctuary, from whose household many loved ones have passed, on their way to the "House not made with hands." Among the cherished memories are those of your ministers, high and noble servants of the Lord Jesus Christ. Could they speak now, all would bear witness of your being faithful helpers and supporters in this branch of the Lord's vineyard. As one of their favored successors, I ask the privilege of inscribing this volume to you. It is only a slight token of appreciation of the loving kindnesses which you have showered upon me and my household.

Gratefully yours,

FREDERICK F. SHANNON.

The Parsonage,
196 Columbia Heights.

CONTENTS

I. God's Faith in Man, ... 9
II. Commanding Christ, ... 26
III. The Law of Revelation, ... 41
IV. A Soldier's Faith, ... 58
V. God's Unspeakable Gift, ... 74
VI. Two Pictures of God, ... 91
VII. The World's Greatest Literature, 108
VIII. The Minister's Dictionary, ... 122
IX. The Most Wonderful Garden in the World, ... 137
X. The Blessed Hungry, ... 154
XI. Life's Rehearsal, ... 168

I

GOD'S FAITH IN MAN*

"And God said, Let us make man in our image, after our likeness: and let them have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the birds of the heavens, and over the cattle, and over all the earth, and over every creeping thing that creepeth upon the earth."—GEN. i. 26.

I HAVE chosen this text because it emphasizes, it seems to me, one of the constantly overlooked truths of the Bible, of history, of experience. We make much of man's faith in God; and in this we do well, for without faith it is impossible to please either God or man. Now man's faith in God is one of the imperial and creative facts of history; it speaks for itself; it is the genius of salvation, the father of heroism, the mother of sacrifice, the brother of service, the sister of mercy. Studying the characters and achievements of men and women fed on the breasts of faith, we seem to realize at least a part of the truth of our Lord's declaration "that all things are possible to him that believeth." "The root of all theology," says Principal Forsyth, "is real religion; of all Christian theology, and even apologetic, it is Christian religion, it is saving faith in Jesus Christ. It is justifying faith, in the sense of faith in a forgiving God through the

*Delivered before the Interdenominational Ministers' Association of Toronto, Canada, January 20, 1919.

cross of Jesus Christ." Thus faith in God is the crucial point for each of us. Moreover, it must be a definite faith, if we are to vividly experience the glow of divine sonship in our spiritual consciousness. It is not just faith in God; it is faith in the God and Father of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. "The essential thing in a New Testament Christianity," says the author just quoted, "is that it came to settle in a final way the issue between a holy God and the guilt of man." Much of our present-day Christianity endeavors to escape from this pressing problem; and every individual and national attempt to do so results in disastrous confusion. Men talk glibly of a final religion as if it were something to be finally evolved in the far-off future. "Evolution is within Christianity, but Christianity is not within evolution." Vaster than the physical universe, Christianity takes no orders from matter; it gives meaning to the cosmos while it illuminates Time and Eternity. Once and forever God has given us the final religion in the Son of His Bosom; every soul who receives Him knows His finality; and He is received by faith, and faith alone. Therefore, without lightening, by the weight of a breath, the necessity for placing increasing emphasis upon man's faith in God, I wish to consider with you another side of the shield of faith; I had almost said the dust-covered side, the side which discloses God's faith in man.

I

The supreme proof of God's faith in man is furnished by God Himself: The field is large, asking for a wide survey; yet there is a certain advantage in concentration, even restriction. Therefore, let us approach this phase of our study along a twofold path.

First, God's faith in man is evidenced by the place man occupies in the scale of being. "And God said, Let us make man in our image, after our likeness." Thus are we splendidly challenged to consider man's claim to distinction, to uniqueness, in the wide-ranging creations of the Almighty. What is it? It consists in the fact that man is made in the image of God: He thinks, he wills, he reasons, he loves, he creates, he bears the weight of Godhood, for glory or for shame, through all the epochs of his deathless career. As a youngster, I read an impressive, if somewhat fancifully picturesque, description of man's creation. When God, in Holy Counsel, resolved to make man, some of the other and older orders of the universe desired that man should be patterned after them. The Evening Star said: "Make him like me." Aurora, goddess of the dawn, said: "Make him like me." Helios, god of the sun, said: "Make him like me." Finally, an archangel, robed in majesty, sublimely stood in the presence of God, and said: "Make him like me." But God refused them all, saying: "Let us make man in our image, after our likeness."

The picture is at least luminous with this truth: Man occupies a position of solitary grandeur in the scale of all created being. He asks no favors of a measureless universe of matter; the worlds may crush his body, and man can still get on—gloriously and unhinderingly on—without corpuscles or atoms, unceasingly chanting his music of Love and Mind as he journeys the mystic ways of being. Man asks no odds of the angels; God never intended that man should imitate even the angels; He desires that man should be his wonderfully human self—a little god, a junior partner in the work of making earth and time spheres of high conduct and worthful achievement. "But," you ask, "what has all this to do with God's faith in man?" Well, I assume that the Almighty, thoroughly understanding His business, never would have placed man in such an august scale in creation, without having entire faith that man is capable of meeting the demands required by his exceptional rôle. It was as if the good God had said: "O man, My frail human child, you are very dear unto Me. There was great loneliness in My heart until I begot thee. Unlike the angels, you have been given a body that aches and dies. Unlike the animals, you have been given a mind that aspires, a spirit that gazes through its bodily windows upon My Face. Standing midway between the angel and the animal, a little lower than the one, infinitely higher than the other, you are different from either. In My universe there is a tiny star

named Earth. Thereon life is to be manifested that angels are ill adapted to; thereon careers must be begun that animals cannot understand. It is a strange and beautiful world, O Child of My Heart! I have ribboned it with seas; I have roofed it with galaxies; I have sowed it with countless forms of life; but it lacks a human lord, a human overseer, a human leader. The need of you among the worlds is great; you are My answer to this yearning need. Go forth from My hand with the blessing of a faithful Creator. You shall be lonely, tempted, defeated; but your loneliness shall speak to My fellowship; your temptation shall call for My help; your defeat shall make possible My triumph. At last, having been faithful unto death, you shall come back Home—Home to the Deathless and the Tearless—Home to God's Heart—Home to the Holiness, the Laughter, the Love, and the Music that dwells behind the stars."

Because of God's investments in man, I feel assured that the human enterprise cannot permanently fail. Retrogressions and progressions there have been and will continue to be—epochal backslidings and mighty forward movements. Self-wounded, bleeding, war-cursed, sin-crazed, the staggering Human Giant seems unable to reach Home; but just when his degradation is the deepest and his besotted condition the most discouraging, there are sudden unveilings of suppressed splendor, swift outflashings of unsuspected nobility, tremendous exhibitions of holy

heroisms that bid even dejected and disconsolate men look up and hope, while from behind the silences comes the golden whisper that Christ shall yet see of the travail of His soul and be satisfied. It is a million-yeared journey from protoplasm to the Madonna of Motherhood; yet, made in the image of God, a unique social unit moving among the lower and higher orders of creation, man has the right to exclaim:

"How much of Godhood did it take—
What purging epochs had to pass,
Ere I was fit for leaf and lake
And worthy of the patient grass.

"What mighty travails must have been,
What ages must have molded me,
Ere I was raised and made akin
To dawn, the daisy, and the sea.

"In what great struggles was I felled,
In what lives had I labored long,
Ere I was given a world that held
A meadow, butterflies, and song.

"But oh, what cleansings and what fears,
What countless raisings from the dead,
Ere I could see Her, touched with tears,
Pillow the little weary head."

A second evidence of God's faith in man is suggested by my text. It is in the task to which man has been assigned. "And let them have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the birds of the heavens, and over the cattle, and over all the earth, and over every creeping thing that creepeth upon the earth." Here is a task, surely, that is

altogether worthy of a giant. There are three factors in all work—the taskmaster, the task, and the performer of the task. And by what method, and in what spirit, does the taskmaster lay hold of the performers of his task? If the task is small, a small man will do; if the task is large, a large man is required. An employer of men on a vast scale assures me that there is comparatively no difficulty in obtaining men for unimportant positions. It is when he requires a $10,000 man, or even a $15,000 or $25,000 man, that he experiences most trouble. Do you think my friend hires a little man for a big job? No. He hires a man because he believes that his employe is amply qualified to meet every exigency.

Now, the simile may be unduly anthropological; but I maintain that God's faith in man is nowhere more moving, more ineradicable, more magnificent, more subduing, than in the task He assigned to His frail human child "in the dim beginning of the years." Consider this: Man was sent into the cosmic arena to master the physical forces. Is it a small thing to be commanded to challenge the material universe? How shall this athletic biped behave himself as he goes forth to whip the austere, defiant earth and air into subjection? As he stands there, close up to the beginning of things, with the tumbling physical chaos matching the crude, chaotic conditions of his untried mind, does he not betoken a stupendous proposition? It was as if God had led His man infant up to some high, uncomprehended

peak of vision and said unto him: "Look yonder, My Child, at the rolling earth—a twinkling island of emerald set in the oceans of space. It is the haunt of engulfing seas, of consuming mountains, of mephitic valleys. Poisons hide in the atmosphere; monsters infest sea and land; death runs before and behind. Sometimes your homes will be shaken down by earthquakes; sometimes your cities will be submerged by tidal waves; sometimes your continents will be swept by plagues; sometimes your nations will be encrimsoned by war. Yet have I toiled uncomputed ages to make the earth habitable for you. You represent one of My grandest experiments in the unfolding of the worlds. Because you love, the cradle shall be your dearest piece of furniture; because you are not wholly of the earth earthy, the grave shall be one of your most sacred memorials. Many elements are concealed in yonder earth-laboratory; you must combine them. There are sweet sounds slumbering in the air; you must evoke them. Languages must be created; civilizations founded; Parthenons built; pictures painted; poems written; continents federated; mountains tunneled; rivers bridged; oceans sailed. In a word, the chaos must give place to harmony. I furnish only the raw material: you must build your cathedrals; sing your songs; plan your cities; develop your arts and sciences; be fruitful, multiply, replenish the earth, subdue it, and have dominion over the sea and the heavens as well. The task is gi-

gantic: it will cost you ages of agony and bloody sweat; but oh, My Child, you are able to discharge your tremendous obligations. I believe in you; I trust you implicitly. I created the universe out of nothing, but I created you out of Myself; you are more wonderful than all the planets that have been, or shall be, because you are a casket of dust quivering with divinity, a robe of flesh set with jewels of mind. Therefore, nothing shall be able to stand before you. Heavy burdens may bend you; time may wrinkle you; death may smite you. But neither burdens nor time nor death shall overwhelm you, because the eternal God is thy refuge, and underneath are the Everlasting Arms."

Talk about man's faith in God! God's faith in man, my friends, is one of the abiding realities at the root of things, a part of the moral stuff composing the ultimate foundations of the universe. Were it not so, this blind, sinning, wounded human giant, refusing to look unto the hills of God as he goes on grinding in the mills of materialism, would have perished from the earth ages ago, leaving only the fossil remains of an extinct species to testify that man wrought his own stupendous doom and traced it in the dust.

II

Consider, furthermore, the historic continuity of God's faith in man. As I have already insisted, God built and sustains our palatial world-

house: He laid its foundations on stones of fire under seas of crystal; He reared its enskied walls of fluent sapphire and vermillion; He roofed it over with a goldenly fretted firmament. But after placing all the materials of its furniture here, God asks man to organize those materials into definite, useful, beautiful forms, and to arrange them in their most artistic settings. And to accomplish this work, man requires more than knowledge, more than mechanical skill, more than bewitching dreams. Man must be fired by moral passion; moral passion is fired by faith; and man's faith is fired by trust in Somebody not only, but by Somebody's faith in him. This is the spring, the fountain-head, from which faith's vital streams cleansingly flow. Your faith in God means much, even more than words can say; but God's faith in you means more than does your faith in God. And why do I say that? Because, when your faith fails, and it is always failing, God's faith, working by love, faileth never, but continues to call: "O, My Child, how can I give thee up?"

Glance at the historic highways. Study the molding, shaping Fact of the history-makers. I think you will conclude that this is not only one of the great overlooked truths, but so profoundly important that it is entitled to right of way, and that "emphatic trifles" must not be allowed to sidetrack it. Look at Abram, all aglow with his call from God. It is one of the creative moments in our humanity. "Now the Lord said unto

Abram, Get thee out of thy country, and from thy kindred, and from thy father's house, unto the land that I will show thee: and I will make of thee a great nation, and I will bless thee, and make thy name great; and be thou a blessing: and I will bless them that bless thee, and him that curseth thee will I curse: and in thee shall all the families of the earth be blessed." And what did his kindred, his father's household, his friends, his neighbors, say? What impression did God's golden whisper to Abram's soul make upon them? Nobody knows, exactly, what they said in reply. The reporter's time had not yet come; so there is no written records of their speech. But human nature is just human nature, and invariably reports itself; therefore, I venture that this was the substance of their remarks: "Aha! and you've had a call from God, have you, Abram? Going to leave home, are you? May I ask what country you are going to? Don't know? Well, that's strange! Be careful that you don't starve on the way! Wiser men than you have gone out on just such foolish errands, and they were never heard of afterward." Naturally, Abram was discouraged, dejected, perplexed by such talk. Who steadied the patriarch in that black hour? Who lifted the bottles of consolation to his parched lips? God—the high and Holy God! "Never mind, Abram," the heavenly whisper came again. "Men have no faith in you or your venture. But be not cast down; I have faith in thee; look at the stars;

tell their number, if thou canst! Even so shall thy seed be."

Look at Moses. From a keeper of sheep, God calls him to shepherd the generations. Consider his reluctance, his timidity, in the presence of his task. Eighty years old, Moses may have thought that he had earned the right to a suburban life. But God showed him that he was not to bask in the sunset, but to go forth breathing the breath of new mornings over the world. God's people are in Egyptian bondage; they must be rescued; and this man, fresh from his university in the desert, must teach a tyrant if he can, and defy him if he must. "But," argued Moses, "I am not eloquent, neither heretofore, nor since Thou hast spoken unto Thy servant; for I am of slow speech, and of a slow tongue." Clever argument that for a tongue-tied man! But not clever enough to thwart the Lord God. "And the Lord said unto him, Who hath made man's mouth? or who maketh a man dumb, or deaf, or seeing, or blind? is it not I, the Lord?" Now is it not possible to analyze the mood of Moses? He simply lacked faith in himself; and the fact that he was saved from himself and an obscure career in the wilderness, the fact that the nations possess his majestic moral code, is due entirely to God's faith in this finally indomitable leader of men.

Look at David, son of Jesse. Evidently, Samuel had mourned too long for Saul. The disowned king had fallen out of line in the march of divine events. It is just possible, however, for

a man to lose step with God and still keep up with men—a kind of invisible cripple making pretentious strides. Externally, Saul was still king, though he had trampled his crown in the mire. And he was very dear unto Samuel. Think you the old prophet ever forgot that day when the youthful Saul started out in search of his father's asses, turned up at the seer's house, was duly anointed, and went back home an unconvincing king? Never! The youth of old age is in the memory of the beautifully youthful. Saul was the darling of Samuel's soul, and when the unkingly king toppled down in ruins, the elderly man felt that there was indeed "a lonesome place against the sky." Nevertheless, though men may fall, God's purposes cannot be unalterably tripped up; they must go on, everlastingly winning even while wicked opposition is everlastingly losing. So Samuel, king-maker and king-breaker, fills his horn with oil, and goes to Bethlehem. At his approach, the elders of the city tremble. (Would to God the old man might visit New York once in awhile!) He prepares a sacrifice to God, and invites the trembling elders, Jesse and his sons, to come. Looking at Eliab's stately figure, Samuel said: "Surely, the Lord's anointed is before Him." Expert king-maker though he was, God had to give his practiced eyes new color-tones of perfection. "But the Lord said unto Samuel, Look not on his countenance, or on the height of his stature; because I have rejected him; for the Lord seeth not as

man seeth; for man looketh on the outward appearance, but the Lord looketh on the heart." Next, Jesse caused Abinadab to pass before Samuel, then Shammah, and, finally, seven of his sons. But after seeing the seven, Samuel shook his head, and asked: "Are your children all here, Jesse?" "Y-e-s—well, no, not exactly, either. I have one more, the youngest, and he is keeping the sheep." "Better send and fetch him," said Samuel, "because we will not sit down to the sacrifice until he comes." Just then Eliab winked at Abinadab and said, in an undertone: "So 'Red' is going to get into this fun, too!" For David's other name among his brothers—and don't you forget it—was just plain "Red Head." How do I know? I know because I know big brothers. In the whirl of the centuries, big brothers remain big brothers still! So David came in and, lo! "he was ruddy, and withal of a beautiful countenance, and goodly to look upon. And the Lord said, Arise, anoint him; for this is he!"

Yes, this is he—the king, the sweet singer, the lover, the father, the friend—I had almost said the saint, but somehow Saint David does not fit very well; and it is not altogether due to the fact that David lived before the era of saints had dawned. Yes, this is he—the man of blood, the man of self-will, the man of lust, the man of impulse. A great nature and a great sinner, yet David never made terms with his sin. Hating himself because of his sin, which was ever before

him, how often must he have been tempted to self-destruction! But having lost faith in himself, David was never forsaken by God. Whether we behold him in his inferno of sin, his purgatory of repentance, or his paradise of forgiveness, it is always God's faith in David that impresses us, inspires us, bids us hope. Like that weeping, broken-hearted father climbing to his chamber over the gate, we seem to hear, at times, the wail of that Infinite Heart behind the stars: "O my son David, my son, my son David! would I had died for thee, O David, my son, my son!"

But, my friends, I have reserved the supreme illustration of our truth to the last. It is our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. We never get to the end of Him. He is fresher than spring, greener than June, younger than morning, older than eternity—the ending of all our human beginnings, the beginning of all our human endings. Look at Him, and behold His incurable faith in man. What is the greatest single event in human history? Is it not the calling of the Twelve Apostles? Noiseless as a sunrise, yet the calling of those twelve men by Jesus is big with the promise of new heavens and a new earth. Your government, your home, your democracy, your art, your science, your ethics—everything you have and everything you hope to have that is worth having—all of these streams flow down from that mountain up into which He went, "and calleth unto Him whom He Himself would." The Will that can bind or loose the bands of

Orion chose twelve frail human wills to inaugurate the Kingdom of God among men. Unlettered, without social prestige, devoid of political power, lacking the emoluments of wealth, yet these twelve men—bigoted, selfish, sinful—are sent forth to conquer the world. Many times they were without faith in themselves, in man, or God. Apparently doing everything in their power to make it impossible for even God to trust them, yet the Lord Christ goes on believing in them, inspiring them, strengthening them, loving them unto the end, and on across the beckoning frontiers of "the Land of Beginning Again."

God's faith in man is indeed a strong and vital truth, at once subduing and heartening. Have we lost faith in ourselves? Let us be wise men, go to Bethlehem, and witness the epiphany of God in the flesh. Have we lost hope in human governments? Let us climb the Mount of Beatitudes, and consider the things by which nations, as well as individuals, live. Are we convinced that man is hopelessly degenerate, fallen so deep among his own ruins that not even God can clear away the debris? Let us visit, with humility, and awe, and smiting breasts, the Hill outside the city wall; God can touch a forbidding skull into a fountain of cleansing for all uncleanness. Have we yielded our dead into the cold bosom of the last enemy while death's wild, roaring winds have blown out all the candles of man-made hope? Let us make our way to that tomb where death fought his utmost and lost—lost his sting,

lost his victory, lost even his terror. And having gone along these great ways of revelation, and having seen the wonderful sights they hold for men and angels, we may well retrace our steps back to their sublime beginnings, back to that Eden garden wherein God set out His own undying flower of faith, which He has tended and kept green for a thousand ages and will watch over for ten thousand more, because it was He Who originally said: "Let us make man in our image, after our likeness: and let them have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the birds of the heavens, and over the cattle, and over all the earth, and over every creeping thing that creepeth upon the earth."

II

COMMANDING CHRIST

"Thus saith the Lord, the Holy One of Israel, and his Maker: Ask me of the things that are to come; concerning my sons, and concerning the work of my hands, command ye me."—ISA. xlv. 11.

THOUGH my text is taken from that great chapter in the Book of Isaiah, in which God announces His commission to Cyrus, the sermon is to be on neither the Persian, nor, specifically, the prophecy of which he forms a part. Rather do I desire that the passage should serve as an open door to that palace of Christocentric glory in the seventh chapter of St. Luke's Gospel. The centurion's faith, John the Baptist's doubt, the sinful woman's gratitude and forgiveness, the Nain widow's restored son, all figure in that chapter. They are occasions on which the redemptive power of God in Christ is so majestically released, that we feel the sovereign Godhead of the prophet is graciously disclosing itself in the history of the evangelist. "Concerning My sons, and concerning the work of My hands," said the Holy One of Israel, "command ye Me." Thus I want us to consider how Christ, the incarnate God, was commanded by various people in the Gospel chapter; how, in-

deed, He is still commanded by certain great forces and undying needs in the souls of men and women.

I

This surprising centurion suggests that the sense of need, inspired by love, invariably commands Christ. He was a man of authority, a good citizen, a greatheart, and yet he was conspicuous for this—he was burdened with a sense of need that could be met by God alone. And is not this one of the secrets of life's holiest enrichment? No man can become spiritually great without a vivid sense of need—the need that Christ supplies. But just as certain as man's passionate need of the divine asserts itself, Heaven rushes swifter than thought to his aid. God is ever watching for opportunities to help His children; and oftentimes He watches most anxiously when we least suspect His presence and interest. The Moon system for the blind is known everywhere. But how was the awful need of these multitudes of blind people brought home to the heart of humanity? Why, by one man going blind. William Moon was an English youth, with his heart set on the Christian ministry. At twenty-two he was compelled to give up his ministerial education because of total blindness. For him the fair universe suddenly turned dark, the heavens were clothed with blackness and covered with sackcloth. There was chaos, rebellion, disorder—everything had seemingly gone wrong, because trouble individualized makes us aware

of the trouble in the world. Driven in upon himself, young Moon began to think of his blind comrades. He started a school for blind children; he invented an embossed type of nine letters, less complicated than the old system, whereby millions are enabled to read; he became an evangelist of the Everlasting Goodness unto all lands. Was not the last wave of light entering Moon's dying eye an unvoiced prayer to God to come and help his blind brothers? And the Christ of God came—came through Moon's affliction for the deliverance of multitudes. God gave one man the talent of blindness that He might give tens of thousands the privilege of reading through sightless eyes. Our Christ can be commanded—nay, He loves to be commanded. When the voice of need cries aloud in the human soul, and that voice is wet with the tears of unselfish love, God bends over His child as yearningly as a mother bends over the cradle. A friend on the Park Slope said to me: "I had a rather unusual experience this week. I send one of my boys, located in the West, a monthly allowance. I don't know how to explain it, but in sending his check for this month, I had a feeling that he was in need of a little more than his customary allowance, and I sent him a larger check. Now just think—here is my boy's letter, saying he is hard pressed financially, and asking me if I will not please send him more money for this month. Well," said the happy father, "our letters crossed on the way, but I think mine reached him first."

"Before they call, I will answer"—that is the disposition and vigilance of the Being who controls the universe. "If ye then, being evil, know how to give good gifts unto your children, how much more shall your Heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to them that ask Him"—if imperfect parents can make good gifts, how much more perfectly shall the perfectly good God give His best gift to the asking soul? God might give us His worlds, and yet by refusing to give us the Holy Spirit — *Himself* — make existence intolerably monotonous; yet even God cannot give us His supreme gift without our coöperation. "Thus saith the Lord, the Holy One of Israel, and his Maker: Ask Me of the things that are to come; concerning My sons, and concerning the work of My hands, command ye Me." We must command God, the Universal Servant, that we may be qualified to serve.

II

John the Baptist might be cited as the classic New Testament example of faith beset by doubt. I know there is a type of exposition which attempts to explain away John's doubt, as if it compromised that great servant of the Lord. When will men learn that the Bible does not apologize for its characters? It paints them just as they are, good and bad, wise and foolish, holy and unholy. And then it reveals a Christ who turns their weakness into strength, their foolishness into wisdom, their sinfulness into holiness. Ex-

plain it as we may, John had an acute attack of doubt. He was of rugged mould—fearless, conscientious, simple as a child, strong as a giant. He believed that God was going to do certain things through Christ, such as laying the axe at the root of the tree of Jewish injustice, that He was going to burn up with fire unquenchable all the chaff in society and religion. And John was perfectly right in thus believing: God is unalterably opposed to unrighteousness, the universe is organized unto its final overthrow. But it may be that John demanded that the Messiah achieve His ends by the Baptist's methods. Much smaller men than John have thrown themselves into Doubting Castle because God refused to adopt their specific programs for righting the wrongs of the world.

Or again: John's doubt may have been the result of physical reaction. He was an out-of-doors man. The color of the desert was in his body, the croon of the wind was in his heart, the fire of the stars was in his spirit. John recalls certain portions of the Rocky Mountains. There are miles upon miles of desolate sublimity, with the little green things, blooming flowers and perfumed shrubs, almost concealed. Yet if you scale the apparently bare heights, the green things, the lovely things, are there. And behind John's roughness there was gentleness; all through the solemn sides of his craggy nature the sweetest flowers waved in laughter and bloom. But now John is in prison—the winds are a memory, sil-

ver dawns and mysterious nights are a dream, wild creatures no longer regard his lonely stride —and John is the victim of doubt. "Sometimes I believe, and sometimes I do not believe," said the great Luther. Even so, physical gloom may have momentarily eclipsed the prophet's spiritual vision.

What then? Why, one of the most beautiful things in the history of a soul shines out. Calling two of his disciples, John "sent them to the Lord." "Art thou He that cometh," they said, "or look we for another?" Now what I want a direct answer to is this: Can faith, harassed by doubt, command my Lord? God's answers to big questions are given in big ways. "In that hour He cured many of diseases and plagues and evil spirits; and on many that were blind He bestowed sight." Is not that a supremely great answer to carry back to a disciple in prison and in doubt? Would you like to have a greater? You may have it, inasmuch as the spiritual is superior to the physical, if you will send to John's Lord. Have you been sending to somebody else? Perhaps you have been calling on the scientists, the philosophers, the painters, the scholars, the musicians, and the preachers to come and deliver you out of your prison of doubt. They are all good enough in their way, but just let me whisper a secret into the ear of your soul: They are not good enough to set you at liberty. They do not know you. They say they do; some of them profess to be brilliant experts in human nature. But

they are greatly mistaken; they simply play about on the surface of human nature, pointing out a defect here and a cure there; but they do not really know your soul. The only Being who knows the soul is that Being who creates and redeems the soul—the Lord Jesus Christ.

It is a fact that the darkest epochs of history disclose some of the brightest revelations of God. Of our own dreadful and glorious era, a writer says: "The world has never been so conscious of Christ as in these days of horror. Cartoons show Him everywhere. The hand of the dead soldier rests on His wounded feet; the sorrowing wife feels His consoling presence." The experience of that sick soldier boy at Gallipoli is only one of the myriad flashes struck from our contemporary midnight. Unacquainted with war, its horror and ghastliness smote him with fear and trembling. Yet, in spite of all this, he resolved to do his duty. Frozen with fear, yet determined to face one's duty—is there a finer type of courage than that? I think it measures up pretty close to Napoleon's two-o'clock-in-the-morning kind of courage. Added to this feeling of fear was a physical ailment, which had reduced him to almost helpless bodily weakness. Yet, rather than fall out of line, he set his jaws and held on like grim death. Growing steadily weaker, he finally cried out: "Oh, God, send something to comfort me!" Looking down at his feet, there was a piece of paper containing these words from Henry Francis Lyte's immortal hymn:

"When other helpers fail, and comforts flee,
Help of the helpless, O abide with me."

Did the Christ of the helpless come to that soldier lad? Of course He came! He came because, under such conditions, God does not know how to stay away. I press a button and a darkened room bursts into luminance. I call for electricity and it comes. Is God less than electric energy? I step on my accelerator and the motor begins to speed up. I call for mechanical power and it comes. Is God less than a mechanism and a combination of exploding gases? I set my lips to the mouthpiece of the telephone and the tones of my voice are heard across the continent. Is God more deaf than the ear He hath made? You say to your dear one: "I love you." Is God more dumb than the tongue He hath fashioned to be the organ of speech? "He that planted the ear," asks the Psalmist, "shall He not hear? He that formed the eye, shall He not see? He that chastiseth the nations, shall He not correct, even he that teacheth man knowledge?" To the understanding soul, the universe is alive with mind, with purpose, with goal. "At sunrise," says Tyndall, "we came among the Alps; they were of sandstone, stratified very regularly." Every word of which may be scientifically true! And yet—think of it!—*regularly stratified sandstone among the Alps, and at sunrise!* At such an hour, with such a scene, one would have thought sandstone had but a single office, and that an

altar before which to bow down in worship! Sandstone here—sunrise there—God everywhere! Mysterious? Yes, and unspeakably glorious! "I am the light of the world," says the enfleshed God of the sandstone and the sunrise: "he that followeth Me, shall not walk in the darkness, but shall have the light of life." Confronted by a thousand questions which cannot be satisfactorily answered, the very best thing you can do, my friend, is to send for Christ. He is sure to come to you Himself; and when you have Him, you will be astonished to find how relatively unimportant your unanswered questions are. "Concerning My sons, and concerning the works of My hands," He says, command ye Me."

"Absolutely tender,
Absolutely true,
Understanding all things,
Understanding you,
Infinitely loving,
Exquisitely near,
This is God our Father—
What have we to fear?"

III

Penitence, melting a soul in tears of gratitude, also commands the Lord Christ. In all its compelling power and pathos, this truth is exemplified in the story of Simon the Pharisee and the woman from the streets of the city. Simon seems to have been a kind of neutral in his attitude toward the Saviour. Generous enough to invite

Him to his home, he was yet so inhospitable as to neglect the simplest tokens of oriental courtesy. He provided no water for the Master's feet, he gave Him no kiss of greeting, he offered no anointing oil for His head. But the woman rained tears upon His feet and wiped them with her hair; the woman kept kissing, not His head, but His feet; Simon did not have even oil for His head, but the woman had ointment for His feet. Verily, from her alabaster lyre she played a wordless hymn of praise. "And He said unto the woman, Thy faith hath saved thee; go into peace."

By way of contrast to this woman, Simon represents a type of life altogether too familiar in the fields of human nature. It is the spirit that patronizes Christ. Is it not evident that Simon considered that he was honoring the Master by inviting Him to his house? Oh, the pity, the unutterable pity, of it all! Are there any pharisees living on your street? Eject them at once! Dispossess them quick! Get out a writ of love and arrest them instanter, else they will shrivel so completely that the devil's detectives will have difficulty in locating them on the Day of Judgment!

But look at this woman! Is she not an outcast, a trailer of the streets, a creature scorned by respectable folk? Yes, she was all that; but she is all that no longer. She has broken into the society of the forgiven! I wonder if she had not heard Jesus say: "Come unto Me, all ye that

labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take My yoke upon you, and learn of Me; for I am meek and lowly in heart: and ye shall find rest unto your souls. For My yoke is easy, and My burden is light." It is just possible that she had heard His gracious invitation and determined to seek Him when the opportunity came. I wonder, too, if she did not press her opportunity. It may be that, standing in the background, she heard Simon's invitation to the Master and followed, afar off, "clean forspent with sin and shame," to that haven of forgiveness and peace.

No matter what our surmisings may be, here is the dear, everlasting truth: There is power in the penitent soul to command the forgiving Christ. Cleverness may be unaware of Him; pride may hunt the worlds through and fail to find Him; genius may draw "the bolt of Nature's secrecies" and in nowise discover Him; pomp may open its doors and yet be utterly ignorant of Him while He stands in its midst; learning may strive to abstract His revelations and be rewarded with nothing more than the baffling sense of its own futility; the mighty, the wise, the powerful may catch no rumours of His redemptive majesty. But oh, where hearts are like a broken fount, where humans smite their breasts in the knowledge of their own unworthiness—thither He rushes with pardon on His lips and health in His presence! An old Welsh legend says that a man wished to realize his heart's desire. To do so, this almost impossible task was imposed upon

him: He must gather, before sunset, every grain of wheat which had been scattered over a large field. He went to those industrious little creatures—the ants—and enlisted their aid. All day they worked furiously, and when evening drew on, every single grain of wheat but one was gathered in. Just as the sun was setting, a lame ant was seen bringing in that last grain. Face to face with the immortal things, the race is not to the swift, the battle is not to the strong, but the lame shall take the prey—the lame shall leap into Everlasting Arms and be thrown forward to everlasting victories. "This poor man cried, and the Lord heard him, and saved him out of all his troubles." Ah, poor soul, "cry,—clinging Heaven by the hems," and the Holy Spirit, God's courier-dove, will brood over thy chaos of sin until thou hast become a harmony of redemption! This is God's challenge to you: "Concerning My sons, and concerning the work of My hands, command ye Me."

IV

How death, smiting at the broken heart of parenthood, commands Christ, is set forth in the golden history of the widow of Nain. Approaching the city, the Master is met by a funeral procession. "Now when He drew near to the gate of the city, behold, there was carried out one that was dead, the only son of his mother, and she was a widow: and much people of the city was with her. And when the Lord saw her, He had com-

passion on her, and said unto her, Weep not. And He came nigh and touched the bier: and the bearers stood still. And He said, Young man, I say unto thee, Arise. And he that was dead sat up, and began to speak. And He gave him to his mother."

Have you thought, my friends, of the wondrous timeliness of our Lord? Of course, in this particular instance He was not formally sent for at all. I say not formally sent for, and yet, where the imperative need was, the need utterly beyond all human relief, there He was—unasked, unprayed for, unexpected. I think it is always so. Suppose we read it this way: "Behold, there was carried out one that was dead, the only son of his mother, and she was a widow." Is it not just about as hopeless and pathetic a situation as one could imagine? Happily, here is the true reading: "Now when He drew near to the gate of the city"—ah, here is hope, radiance, rapture! Midnight whitens into morning! He was going in just as death was coming out—oh, the wise seasonableness, the perfect opportuneness of the Lord of life! "But why belabour this point?" you ask. "It was only an accidental meeting; Jesus happened to be going in, and the funeral happened to be coming out." There is at least one fatal weakness in your explanation: It is too easy. It cannot get on, it cannot survive, in a world in which every atom, every sparrow, every hair, every human, is numbered. God is never a second too early, never a cycle too late; He is

omnipresent, always on time. Wonderful reading this—that is, if we know how to read. "And when the Lord saw her"—the eyes of the Lord run to and fro throughout the whole earth, and though a planet may escape His gaze, a widowed mother cannot. There is not enough matter in space to hide her from the look of God. "He had compassion on her"—her sorrow tapped the fountains of His sorrow, her suffering summoned the suffering of the all-pitiful God; in all her affliction was He afflicted, and the Son of His Bosom saved her. "And said unto her, Weep not"—God's consolations are hid in the secret of His presence, and a tear commands that Ineffable Presence. "And He came nigh and touched the bier: and the bearers stood still"—amazed, no doubt, that the rules of ceremonialism should be broken, ignorant that God was passing by, that there was not room for Him and death in the same road. One must stand aside, allowing the Other to pass. "And He said, Young man, I say unto thee, Arise"—but this young man is dead; he is in the abode of departed spirits; this tenantless body is but the material shadow cast by his soul, and that soul is off and away in Hades. No matter! The dead know Christ's voice. His tones will vibrate through invisible realms until, out of the myriads, this young man is reached by them and he comes respondingly back to his chilled house of dust. "And he that was dead sat up, and began to speak"—the warm breath of life began to thrill and tremble into the miracle of

words. The Word that spake all things into being hath spoken a dead son back to life! May not the God who raised a universe out of chaos raise a youth back to laughter and health? "And He gave him to his mother"—glorious prophecy of the time when sons and mothers shall be given back to each other. How deeply consoling is such a Christ to-day, when the young men of the race are being slain by thousands! In the very heart of terror there is a hope—the Christian Hope—that terror cannot touch. "I am the resurrection and the life: he that believeth on Me, though he die, yet shall he live; and whosoever liveth and believeth on Me shall never die." Confronted by death, sin, sorrow, and despair, the Lord's Christ says: "Concerning My sons, and concerning the work of My hands, command ye Me."

III

THE LAW OF REVELATION

"At that season Jesus answered and said, I thank Thee, O Father, Lord of heaven and earth, that Thou didst hide these things from the wise and understanding, and didst reveal them unto babes: yea, Father, for so it was well-pleasing in Thy sight."—St. Matt. xi. 25, 26.

To appreciate the setting of the text, we must recall the situation set forth in the foregoing context. "At that season"—what was distinctive in this particular period of our Lord's ministry? First of all, there was John's doubt. Will this man, who was a composite of rugged strength and beautiful humility, ever question the Master's mission? Yes, he will, and does. "Now when John heard in prison the works of the Christ, he sent by his disciples and said unto Him, Art Thou He that cometh, or look we for another?" Secondly, there was the shallow, heartless, petulant criticism of the people. They were like the children playing in the streets. One moment they cried to each other: "We played dance-music, but you did not dance"; another moment they pouted: "We played at funeral, we wailed, but you did not beat your breasts." John was as sober as a funeral, and they said he had a demon; Jesus was as radiant as children at their games, sanctified the human

lot by eating and drinking, and they characterized Him as gluttonous, a winebibber, a friend of publicans and sinners! Thirdly, there was the unrepentant spirit of the cities. Chorazin, Bethsaida, and Capernaum were scenes of most of Christ's mighty works. But they remained unmoved, stolid, rebellious. They were destroyed by their own wickedness, calling down upon themselves the judgments of Almighty God. Yet, are we not tempted to read these divine judgments simply as obsolete chapters of ancient history? Let us be not deceived—we who have lived through the long, lonely years since August, 1914! Berlin, Constantinople, Petrograd, Paris, London, and New York—each and all are within the relentless grip of the forces of divine retribution. This is a moral world, governed by a Moral God, a God deeply in earnest, and only the fool thinks otherwise. The soul that sinneth shall die; the city that sinneth shall die; the nation that sinneth shall die; the race that sinneth shall die. What then? Calvary alone is equal to sin's doom; but not even Calvary can stay Nature's doom against sin and ungodliness without a complete and surrendered trust in the Christ of Calvary. Oh, no! Chorazin, Bethsaida, and Capernaum are not just faded pages of finished history! Rather do they symbolize plague-spots which will destroy the planet, if sin's loathsome disease is not arrested by faith in Christ, if individuals, cities, and nations do not practice His laws of righteousness, justice, mercy, and truth.

This, in brief, was the season, the period, when our Saviour uttered this most remarkable text. When everything in Time seemed against Him, when all the forces of wickedness met in a dark conspiracy of destruction, He took refuge in Eternity, He escaped into God's eternal heart-home. And in doing so, He stated what we may venture to call the law of revelation. We speak of the reign of law in the physical universe—the law of gravity, the law of the tides, the law of heat, the law of light—and we mean that which is a rule of action, that which is fixed or set. With more than scientific exactness, with the finality of supernatural insight, I think the Lord Christ states the law of revelation in these words: "I thank Thee, O Father, Lord of heaven and earth, that Thou didst hide these things from the wise and understanding, and didst reveal them unto babes: yea, Father, for so it was well-pleasing in Thy sight."

I

Consider, first, the essence, the content, of this law. "Thou didst hide these things." What things? There must have been a particular group of thoughts in the Master's mind. Therefore, we may say, almost with certainty, that "these things" include such ideas as the divine Fatherhood: "When ye pray, say, Our Father, Who art in heaven"; the forgiveness of sins: "The Son of Man hath power on earth to forgive sins"; the sonship of believers: "Now are we the

sons of God, and it doth not yet appear what we shall be"; eternal life: "This is life eternal, that they may know Thee, the only true God, and Jesus Christ, Whom Thou hast sent." And assuredly the verses immediately following my text express some of the very great ideas contained in the law of revelation. How is it possible for the human to know the divine? The Master tells us: "All things have been delivered unto Me of my Father: and no one knoweth the Son, save the Father; neither doth any know the Father, save the Son, and he to whomsoever the Son willeth to reveal Him." How may the soul of man find true rest in activity and true activity in poised and harmonious restfulness? Christ alone discloses the secret: "Come unto Me, all ye that labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take My yoke upon you, and learn of Me; for I am meek and lowly in heart: and ye shall find rest unto your souls. For My yoke is easy, and My burden is light."

II

Consider the working of this law of revelation. "Thou didst hide these things from the wise and understanding, and didst reveal them unto babes." Here are two types of mind, character, temperament, and the law operates towards them in diametrically opposite ways. How does it treat the self-sufficient mind, "the wise and understanding"? With deliberately purposeful concealment: "Thou didst hide these things."

How does it treat the childlike—"babes," fishermen who, in comparison with scribes and pharisees, were conspicuously untaught? The law operates in a revelatory manner: "And didst reveal them unto babes."

Why, then, are God's great things hidden from the self-sufficient mind? In attempting an answer, let us remember, in the first place, that God does not reveal what man can discover. There is a vast field which is not, properly speaking, the subject of revelation—at least in no such sense as the Fatherhood of God, the Saviourhood of Christ, the Holy Spirit in believers. For example: God has packed the earth with material treasures named coal, silver, gold, radium, and helium. But man has to find them, and in finding them he improves the opportunity of developing his own powers. Out there is the ocean. Man crosses the deep in a ship. Now God created both the sea and the man, but God never built a ship. One way of speeding across the country is on the lightning express train. God created the land, every inch of it, but God never built a train. There are star-clusters in space which man can see only through the telescope. God made the stars and the man, but did God ever make a telescope? Our earth is wrapped in a soft envelop of atmosphere. For untold ages only creatures with wings have been able to fly between the earth and heavens. Now man is learning to fly swifter and higher than any bird that cleaves the air. But the aeroplane is not a revelation; it is

a discovery—a big, buzzing, mechanical bird soaring out from its nest in man's brain. God made the brain, of course, but the giant Caproni man must discover and build for himself. In this sense, then, and a most important one it is, God does not reveal what man can discover. Man gets a large part of his education through study of and mastery of the physical forces. Therefore, it would not be good for man to have revealed unto him what he can discover through thought and toil.

On the other hand, man cannot discover what God reveals. Let us make no mistake here, for we are face to face with one of the very greatest truths of Christianity. It is the truth that baffles the wise, that perplexes the understanding. For it is an egregious error to assume that bare, unsanctified mind functions in the realm of revelation as it does in the realm of discovery. Here is a man who toils terribly upon a scientific or a philosophic problem. With finely balanced and keenly trained faculties, he besieges his subject until it utterly surrenders its truth. He is the victor, he knows he is the victor, and receives his mental spoils with joy. Now let us suppose that he turns his superb powers upon "these things" —the Fatherhood of God, the forgiveness of sin, the peace that passeth understanding, the hope that maketh not ashamed. Will he meet with the same measure of success—that is, will these facts of the soul and of God report themselves to his splendid mental powers, unaided by anything

outside of himself, as do the facts of science and philosophy? They will not. Wise and understanding in much knowledge, his ability cannot help him in "these things." His Conrinthianism may storm and swagger and threaten; but harder than gates of brass, and steadier than eternal hills, this old question stands athwart his challenged way: "Hath not God made foolish the wisdom of the world?" There is a passage in the life of the younger Pitt which confirms this proposition. Pitt is a human phenomenon, one of history's very great men. He was Prime Minister at twenty-four; when other Englishmen were trying hard to raise a moustache, Pitt was raising England to a new plane of statesmanship. His maiden speech in the House of Commons drew from Edmund Burke, remembering Pitt's brilliant father, the Earl of Chatham, the statement: "He is not merely a chip off the old block, but the old block itself." He was the one man Napoleon feared and admired—the man whose work was largely responsible for the overthrow of that nineteenth century kaiser. Well, Pitt—so the story goes—went with a Christian friend to hear the godly Richard Cecil. The discourse was on the agency of the Holy Spirit in the hearts of believers. Sounds a bit old-fashioned, eh? Then the stars are old-fashioned, and the morning is old-fashioned, and the breath of spring is old-fashioned, yes, Heaven itself is gloriously old-fashioned! Coming out from the service, Pitt said to his friend: "I could not understand that

sermon. Do you suppose anybody in the house could?" "Yes," was the reply. "There were many plain women, and some children, who understood every word of it, and heard it with joy."

Now this incident ratifies two things: First, the attitude of human nature. "There is something in us all," said Principal Rainy, "which objects to God." And Paul says the natural, the unspiritual man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God: for they are foolishness unto him; and he cannot know them, because they are spiritually judged. How can a man receive things which he honestly believes to be foolish? Or how can a man judge or examine facts, for which he has no equipment? He simply cannot. Second, this inability of human nature emphasizes the method, the redemptive process, of God. "I thank Thee—I praise Thee—O Father, Lord of Heaven and earth, that Thou didst hide these things from the wise and understanding." So we come back to the question already asked: Why does God hide these things from the self-sufficient mind? Because God loves man so much that He would save him to the uttermost; and to save man to the uttermost, God must strike through flesh and intellect and will, tapping the sources of man's moral and spiritual nature, until the sonship that is in man answers back to the Fatherhood that is in God.

Consequently, we come to the second type—the childlike mind—towards which the law of revelation operates. "And didst reveal them

unto babes." The Saviour was perhaps contrasting His own unlettered fishermen-disciples with the learned pharisees and sadducees. John, Peter, and James were unquestionably deficient in academic matters of the law. But their very deficiency, far from being a hindrance, was a positive help in receiving this fresh, new revelation. One advantage of a vigorous, untaught mind is this: It does not have to unlearn so much that is artificial, conventional, false. It is unprejudiced, unhampered by prepossessions; it is teachable; it is trustful; it is humble. With virgin simplicity the childlike mind prays, in the spirit of Solomon: "And now, O Lord my God, Thou hast made Thy servant a king and a priest in the House of Revelation: and I am but a little child; I know not how to go out or to come in. Give Thy servant, therefore, an understanding heart that He may discern between good and evil." Then it is that God takes His carefully hidden things and reveals them. The world's grandest men have been the world's most childlike men. They are the spiritual stations along the wintry coasts of time, catching messages from behind the veils of sense and delivering them to their fellow-pilgrims. Saint Francis of Sales was one of these high-hearted souls. Sitting one evening in the tender sunset glow, a little child nestled by his side with his little chess-board, and the saint and the child played together. An austere brother took him severely to task. "For shame, brother Francis, that you should engage

in a foolish game with a foolish child! What if it were told you that the Lord will presently appear?" "Brother," replied Saint Francis, "I would finish the game. It was for His glory that I began it." And once the King of Saints was asked by His disciples: "Who then is greatest in the kingdom of heaven? And He called to Him a little child, and set him in the midst of them, and said, Verily I say unto you, Except ye turn, and become as little children, ye shall in no wise enter into the kingdom of heaven. Whosoever therefore shall humble himself as this little child, the same is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven."

In view of the fact, then, that so much is vouchsafed unto the childlike, that the law of revelation operates towards them in such wondrous fashion, does history vindicate their contribution to the life of mankind? This is a genuinely practical question, as well as submitting itself to the pragmatic test. Twenty centuries of Christian men and women might furnish eligible witnesses of confirmation; but let us confine our inquiry to one or two of that little band of men chosen by the Master. Are not the members of that first apostolate, under God, the masters of those who know in things divine? Have not these "babes" become the true giants of the race? Why, there is but one Saint John—no second in the annals of time. Others have surpassed him in intellectual force. From one viewpoint, Aristotle stands over against "the disciple Jesus loved" as the

Parthenon stands over against a Galilean hut. So comprehensive is his intellectual grasp, so vast is his power to translate the secrets of the physical world and codify its laws, that the Greek has been called "Nature's Private Secretary." Yet, reading Aristotle, we exclaim with George Meredith: "What a dusty answer gets the soul when hot for certainties in this our life!" But how is it when we turn to Saint John, God's Private Secretary? If we know how to listen, if our inner ears have been tuned to the higher harmonies, "dusty answers" will change to immortal melodies; certainties will be not simply hot—they will catch fire and burn with the glory of the living God. There has been but one Saint Paul—no second. Compare the writings of the apostle with Shakespeare, unquestionably the most vital, versatile, and perfectly uttered genius in the history of the race. As stars fit into their orbits, Shakespeare's thoughts and words fit into each other. God created the minds of these two men—their origin is the same. Therefore, I ask this question: Do the mind of Shakespeare and the mind of Saint Paul turn the minds of men towards the Mind of God with equal power? They do not; indeed, the question answers itself in the still, deep consciousness of man's spiritual nature. A man might earnestly read Hamlet, or Lear, or Othello, and never think of becoming a Christian; a man cannot earnestly read Romans, or Colossians, or Ephesians, without saying: "Surely, God is in this place! I will take off my

shoes of sin, bow down, and worship." Thus are we driven to the conclusion that the Eternal Mind does not function at its highest in the self-sufficient human. It rather lays hold of the childlike, the lowly, and through these unconscious mental pipes blows such music of the skies that, while it perplexes the wise and understanding, soothes and greatens the "babes" who dwell deep in the Eternal Bosom.

III

Think, also, of the divine beauty of the law of revelation. It shows that the greatest thing in the universe is God's impartial Fatherhood. "I thank Thee, O Father, Lord of heaven and earth." Our God is the God of the worlds and the ages. This is the truth that sustains and redeems. Compared with the Everlasting Fatherhood, sending His lovebeats through the whole universe, what is everything else besides? We wonder at stars, electrons, universal energy, the miracle of the cell, the laws that tie the most distant parts of creation into an unbroken unity; and most of all, we wonder at the mind of man, that immaterial something playing forth thought-music upon its harp of brain. But ah! behind all, in all, and over all is the Heavenly Father. "For though there be that are called gods," says Paul, "whether in heaven or on earth; as there are gods many and lords many; yet to us there is one God, the Father, of Whom are all things;

and one Lord, Jesus Christ, through Whom are all things, and we through Him." As a matter of history, this is the truth that possessed a few Galilean fishermen; with it they confronted and destroyed thirty centuries of paganism; and it is the truth before which every godless, Christless human and institution must ultimately go down. Even the Stoic philosophers, the flower of paganism, considered themselves the favorites of heaven, while anything was good enough for the mob. But Christ in men said: "No! There is no difference. Heaven is not a rendezvous for genius; it is the home of goodness, the utmost reach of genius. Indeed, a pure heart may know more of God and reality than the most brilliant mind, if it be unclean and unholy. Christ in you—this is your hope of glory, here and hereafter."

What an uplifting reminder it is that the essential things are for everybody! The dynamic realities pay no more attention to artificial separations, social distinctions, stupid castes, than does the all-glorious sun to the mist concealing a mountain. A few waves of sun-splendor and the mist is gone, while the mountain abides! It is even so of wealth, social position, learning, and a select ancestry face to face with the things of God and the soul. Property, for example, may be held by the few, and property is not an unmixed blessing. But everybody may have an interest in right, which yields golden dividends. Only the walls of the rich are covered by Raphaels, Turners, and Rembrandts; but God's violet

sky-walls are as free to the street-sweeper as to the multi-millionaire. And what painter has ever produced a canvas comparable to that which God sets before our eyes almost any evening? Moreover, if a painter creates a single great picture, his fame is secure; usually, his genius is exhausted on a solitary masterpiece. But the Lord of heaven and earth, whose infinite beauty is constantly bursting forth into some new and glorious expression, is in no danger of exhausting either His designs or His power of execution. "Come up hither, O Lover of Beauty," He calls, "and I will show you higher reaches of beauty still." When a soul is shot through with the beauty of the Lord our God, it has already entered the highways of eternal loveliness. The central things are universal; the non-essential are limited to the few. No trust will ever build a fence around the sun; no Solomon will ever get a corner on knowledge; no croaking band of pessimists will ever destroy life's good cheer. Faith, hope, love, forgiveness, immortality—these belong to no clime or time, to no sect or nation; they are for humanity, and every human being may claim his share in them.

Finally, the glory of the law of revelation is even more marked in this: It reveals the path along which mind attains perfection. Pride begets the closed mind, or else it becomes so focused upon a single phase of reality, that it loses the largest outlook and develops a startling capacity for mis-seeing. On the contrary, the childlike,

trustful mind is open to all the winds of truth that blow. Listening for the heavenly whisper, it says: "What has this fact or revelation for me? I am just a little child trying to learn the Master's alphabet. He has promised to help me spell out a word or two in due time, and I know that He will keep His promise." This is not mock humility; it is verily the only mood and method by which the human spirit can unfold its supreme powers. Although very different men, and, therefore, scarcely lending themselves to comparison, yet I venture to use Huxley and Gladstone as a concrete illustration. They were contemporaries, both were men of integrity, and about equally eminent in their respective fields. Gladstone was a statesman, Huxley was a naturalist; the one was a Christian, the other was not. Differing in many things, they differed very much in the power to project the mind beyond the things seen and temporal. Now the point I wish to make is this: Gladstone could appreciate the world in which Huxley lived; but Huxley, according to his own confession, had very slight, if any, appreciation of the spiritual world in which Gladstone lived and moved and had his being. Huxley knew germ plasm, starry stuff, biological facts and forces, a reign of law; so did Gladstone, but he knew something more: he knew the creative, redeeming God within and behind all physical manifestations. In a word, there was a side of Huxley's nature, and that the most important side, which was undeveloped;

but in Gladstone the spiritual got its chance also. We somehow feel that Huxley deliberately cheated himself out of that to which he was entitled, and which, had he been more hospitable thereto, would have enriched his life immensely. Oh, my friends, Christ does not restrain the best in man; He constrains that best until it issues in complete triumph over the unworthy; He builds the highway along which the human passes to its coronation. Among the modern white knights who have sacrificed themselves to make the world safe for democracy, was Lieutenant Kenneth Garnett. He made an exceptional record in school and university, being at once a brilliant scholar and a splendid athlete. He was the heaviest man in the heaviest boat that ever rowed for Cambridge, being six feet and six inches in height. Well, he went forth to help stem the bloody tide rolling in from the bloody Rhine. While leading his men one beautiful September day, he found that his gas mask was not working. Knowing that death or paralysis awaited him, he shouted: "Trust in Jesus, men. It is an easy way to die." Glorious words and true! Trust in Jesus makes an easy way to die because it makes the only way to live. For the Christian religion is for use here and now. It is meaningless until it indwells a human soul. Herder used to say that "embodiment is the end of all God's ways." Then the highest embodiment, surely, is God's inbreathed Spirit, splendidly irradiating the heart of man. What tint is to a peach, what color is to

a rose, what sparkle is to a gem, what light is to a star—that, and more, is the rich, warm, transfiguring power of the Holy Spirit to the Christian. In the last sermon I heard him preach, the late Dr. J. Wilbur Chapman related this incident: A Liverpool infidel was delivering a tirade against Christianity. Two shop-girls were passing and stopped to hear what he was saying. At the close of his address, after having "destroyed" the Christian faith, the infidel asked: "Does anybody want to say anything for Jesus Christ?" One of the girls replied: "We can't speak much, but we can sing." And then the two sweet girl-voices sang clearly and beautifully:

> "Stand up, stand up for Jesus,
> Ye soldiers of the Cross:
> Lift high His royal banner,
> It must not suffer loss!"

It was surpassingly eloquent, unforgettably impressive! "Ye shall be My witnesses," said the Lord. That is the essential thing for all of us—just to bear witness unto His glorious Saviourhood in every place and relationship. For it is not our much speaking that greatly counts; it is our much living out the truth He whispers to our seeking, waiting hearts. This is the Heaven begun below, to be completed in the City that hath Foundations.

IV

A SOLDIER'S FAITH*

"And when Jesus heard these things, He marvelled at him, and turned and said unto the multitude that followed Him, I say unto you, I have not found so great faith, no, not in Israel."—St. Luke vii. 9.

AMONG other things the Great War has clarified, we must include the faith of the soldiers composing the contending armies. For these millions of men have not struggled through their crimson agony without disclosing their inmost motive power. And always, even at the periods when it seemed most obscure, faith was their dynamic, their driving energy. But faith in what? That question brings us up sharply to the forks of our moral and mental roads. The Teuton's faith, proclaimed a thousand times and with fanatical enthusiasm, was in might, physical power, sheer brute force. And the Allied Armies asserted their faith also. It was grounded in right, in justice, in brotherhood, in humanity, in the conviction that the teachings of Christ are worth living and dying for, that the obligations binding upon individuals are likewise binding upon nations.

---

*Preached in the Parkdale Methodist Church, Toronto, Canada, Jan. 19, 1919.

Therefore, we realize today, as we have probably never realized before, that a soldier's faith is a matter of vital concern. Thus, in our quest of guiding principles for the men who fight righteously, whatever form their fighting takes, we inevitably turn to the supreme sources, which are biblical. In the person of the centurion, as described in St. Luke's Gospel, there is a classic illustration of the soldier's faith. Painted with a master hand and drawn direct from life, his portrait is at once suggestive of strength and beauty. What others thought of him, what he thought of himself, and, above all, what the Master thought of him—these lines are all luminously traced in that immortal sketch. He is a rare example of progress in faith, disclosing its subtle, seedlike beginning, its orderly unfolding, and its unique ending in fruitful achievement.

I

In considering the processes of faith, suppose we begin where the centurion began: Faith in the germ. Using this biological method, we shall at least have the advantage of beginning where every organism begins. "He heard concerning Jesus." That is, the winds of opinion had blown the Nazarene's name into the centurion's ears. Everybody was talking about the wonderful works of the New Teacher and Revealer—the blind received their sight, the deaf heard, the lame walked, the dead were restored to life, the

poor had the Gospel preached unto them. How, then, could he help hearing about Jesus? Moreover, being a man of faith as well as a man of rare humaneness, it was only natural that he should turn to Jesus in his time of trouble. Jesus fits into our troubled hours as yonder vessel fits into the waters of the bay, as sunlight fits into the miracle of bloom.

"He heard." Now faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the word of God. Faith has its physical side—the outer ear, and these marvellous laws of sound whereby it is possible to hear at all. Yet, just because the fact of physically hearing is so familiar to us, we are ever in danger of thwarting the deeper and more essential values of faith, which are spiritual. The deadly monotony of routine, of conventionality, is fatal to our finer natures. Hearing, we do not hear, and seeing, we do not see. We are like Admiral Mahan, who, as a young naval officer, entered that Boston church. How often had he heard the words, "Thou shalt call His name Jesus, for He shall save His people from their sins"; and how often, too, up to that memorable hour, had he failed to hear them! Remembering nothing else, neither the sermon nor the rector's name, he afterwards said: "'Thou shalt call His name Jesus, for He shall save His people from their sins'; almost the first words of the first Gospel. I had heard and read them a thousand times. But now they took on a new meaning. Instantly

scales fell from my eyes, and I saw Jesus as my Saviour."

Ah, my friends, we must see to it that the chilling frosts of custom do not blight our faith in its vital, germinant powers. Faith that produces no joyous commotions in the soul, no deepening steadfastness in the will, no keenly discriminating choices and distinctions in the mind, no quick and unalterable decisions in the conscience, is nothing more than a professional badge. It lacks the stir of inner vitality, the poignancy of hidden reserve. What a chapter is this in the florist's book of flowers! He planted seventeen bulbs of the Easter lily. Sixteen soon put out their garments of snow-white, as if to say: "Come and see, O Man, where angels get color-ideas for their wings." But one, the seventeenth, was sickly and pale. Upon investigation, the gardener discovered that his floral invalid had spent too much time in the society of a nearby, ambitious clematis. Now, the clematis is not, properly speaking, a social but a floral climber. Finding that lily bulb so close at hand, the clematis sent out one little feeler, then another and another, until it wound its slender, throttling arms about the lily bulb and choked it. And do you not recall the Master's own exposition of His parable, "The Sower"? "And he that was sown among the thorns, this is he that heareth the word; and the care of the world, and the deceitfulness of riches, choke the word, and he becometh unfruitful." Oh, it is not enough for us to hear *concerning*

Jesus; we must *hear Jesus.* He alone can arrest the tragedy of the blighted life. He alone gives the soul of man a satisfying viewpoint in a universe of deepening mystery and vastness. For faith in Christ does make all things new here and now. He creates a zone of light in the midst of darkness, a garden of green in the heart of desolation.

II

Beginning in the germ, faith pushes on to the bud. "He sent unto Him elders of the Jews." Faith must incarnate itself; faith must take on flesh and blood; faith must clothe itself in act, in conduct, in character. I have been watching a pot filled with soil. Sometimes it is placed by one of my study windows, where the sunlight streams in. Well, I looked, and, like Elijah's servant, saw nothing—nothing but black dirt and an invisible seed and the glinting sun, millions and millions of miles away. This morning I looked again, and lo! the dark dirt is bragging about its bit of green! Certainly! The germ must clothe itself in the bud, just as faith must clothe itself in action. "What doth it profit, my brethren," asks Saint James, "if a man say he hath faith but have not works? can that faith save him? If a brother or sister be naked and in lack of daily food, and one of you say unto them, Go in peace, be ye warmed and filled; and yet ye give them not the things needful to the body; what doth it profit? Even so faith, if it have not

works, is dead in itself. Yea, a man will say, Thou has faith, and I have works: show me thy faith apart from thy works, and I by my works will show thee my faith."

So, when the centurion sent elders of the Jews unto the Master, his faith was not of the ordinary, theoretical, or theological type. It was human, virile, definite, lusty with common sense. Because it was not at all stereotyped, it had power to move the Saviour in an unwonted manner. It made Him marvel. It made Him exclaim that He had not seen such great faith in Israel. And this kind, this quality of faith, always has the right of way with God. That is why I read that description of the Master's visit to Simon the pharisee. Consider Simon and the woman who was a sinner. Simon imagined he was somebody; and according to our easy-going, slip-shod methods of measuring men, he was somebody. But by the time Christ had finished with him, it would have required a high-power microscope to identify him. "But," you say, "was not Simon a pharisee, and, therefore, very religious?" Very religious? Why, that may mean much, and it may mean nothing whatever! The devils are very religious; they believe; they tremble; but they don't do anything but—stay devils! Yes, indeed, Simon was very religious, and that is the irony of it! Simon was religious, but he was not even a gentleman. Simon was religious, but he was arrogant, haughty, proud. Simon was religious, but he fatally mistook the

Person and Mission of Christ. Simon was victimized by the mis-faith that destroys, by the mis-faith that is blind, by the mis-faith that is unhuman, by the mis-faith that is perpetual stranger to the softening, enriching transformations of humility. By way of contrast, look at the woman. "Standing behind at His feet, weeping, she began to wet His feet with her tears"; Simon had not even provided water. "And kissed His feet"; Simon had not even given the Master's hand or cheek a kiss of greeting. "And anointed them with the ointment"; Simon had not even anointed the Master's head with oil. "And He said unto the woman, Thy faith hath saved thee; go into peace." What became of Simon? Whither did he go? We do not know; we only know that this stained woman was cleansed of her stains, that she is a beautiful illustration of "faith working by love."

It must always remain true, my friends, that faith clothes itself in noble acts. As the centurion sent elders of the Jews unto Christ, so the heart, inspired and motived by the same Christ, sends tender, courageous, apostolic deeds of love to the ends of the earth. And that is what we are here for—not to be socially proper, nor scholastically keen, nor successfully rich, but fundamentally and supremely to so live that our living rushes into Christlike deeds, even as the Maytide rushes into bud, bloom, and fragrance. In a Paris Café, two American soldiers were eating their lunch. Looking out into the street, they

saw a poor, underfed horse drawing a cart, followed by a French mother. Looking again, they saw that the cart contained the body of a soldier. All alone and unattended, save by God and hosts of plumed regiments on High, that mother was following her dead to the grave. But faith that works by love is very swift, startlingly inventive, movingly ingenuous, and arrestingly unconventional, as it dresses itself up in the splendor of a Christlike act. So these two American knights, forgetting their food, forgetting themselves, forgetting everything save the promptings of their hearts, rushed out and fell in behind that mother. Further on, two French soldiers joined them. The woman was so deep in her own sorrow that she trudged all the way to the grave, unaware that she was accompanied by the representatives of two Republics. Then she seized the hands of those American lads and kissed them. Was it not just the kiss of God administered by human lips, the grateful reaction of a mothering soul upon hearts gloriously touched by the all-glorious God? It was a faith like theirs—a surging, budding faith—that inspired one of the sublimest epitaphs that have come, or will ever come, out of this world-inferno. Marking the resting place of British soldiers in a French graveyard, that epitaph reads: "For your tomorrow they gave their today." Generations to come, pausing before those simple words, will wet them with their tears. And why? Because those dead did not die in vain. When freedom, so dear unto them,

was threatened with death, their faith sent such shining deeds throbbing along the paths of the world that, though their bodies were done to death, their souls will shine like the stars forever and ever. As Rupert Brooke sang, Honor, like a king, came back to the earth through them, and their brothers in spirit, the wide world around!

III

Pressing our exposition a step further, we see faith in the blossom. "But say the word, and my servant shall be healed." This centurion was an authority on physical power. He was accustomed to giving orders. "Go!"—"Come!"—"Do!"—these were familar words in his vocabulary, vibrant terms in which authority asserted itself. Yet he was more than an expert in power that discloses itself in physical forms; he sensed the Power behind all power; he felt that Christ was, in some majestic and unique fashion, the custodian of the powers of the universe; that He could touch them, and they would quiver in response to His will. Matter and space, stars and atoms, laws and forces awaited His command. What is disease to Him? As the moon sways the tides, so Christ sways the tides of physical and mental health; and out of His seas of wholeness, He can instantly pump one little rill of healing into the body of the servant so dear unto the centurion. What is distance to the Lord Christ? Bodily localized in space for the time being, yet

was He the Master of immensity, out of Whom space is spun as the spider spins its web. A few miles, therefore, could be easily bridged by the breath of His mouth. How, argued the centurion, could distance baffle Him who created distance? If, as the poet says, there be three silent things: The falling snow, the hour before the dawn, the mouth of one just dead!—yet—yet—even all silent things stir and come out to listen to the tones of His voice! Therefore, says the centurion, Trouble not Thyself; but say the word, and my servant shall be healed.

Here, then, is faith in full bloom. It walks without the aid of the tangible; it runs without the evidence of the material; it flies without the wings of the visible. Yet is not about seven-tenths of our so-called faith only knowledge? Knowledge is power, but it is not powerful enough to move the Arm that moves the worlds; only faith can operate in that august realm. I know two houses, which I have named, respectively, Knowledge and Faith. The first is a spacious structure, fronting on one of our famous avenues. Money and culture have gone into its architecture and furnishings. Sitting alongside it, but considerably further back from the street, is a plain wooden cottage. I have often wondered how the man in the palace endures that unpretentious frame dwelling so close to his mansion. Or, perhaps, I quite misjudge him, and he thinks, as I do, that the most attractive thing about his palace is that little cottage. Every

spring I stand in front of the two houses. This is what I see: A splendid palace of brick and stone; it is so imposing that one can scarcely go along the avenue and fail to admire its magnificence. But the cottage! Well, you will have to look twice before you see it; and if you do not carry an eager, inquiring eye, you may never see it at all. Yet, every springtime that dear little house is one mass of green and bloom and song. Vines climb all over it; here roses wave their censers of perfume; here birds mate and nest and sing. I have named the palace Knowledge because it is so grand and so—dead; I have named the cottage Faith, because it is so vernal, so fragrant, so songful, so vital, reminding one of Mr. Arensberg's enchanting quatrain, "To a Garden in April":

> "Alas, and are you pleading now for pardon?
> Spring came by night—and so there is no telling?
> Spring had his way with you, my little garden....
> You hide in leaf, but oh! your buds are swelling!"

And one of these days the House of Knowledge will tumble down in ruins, having fulfilled its function in the vast unfoldings of creation. But the Cottage of Faith shall abide; along with Hope and Love it shall ever be coming into its own, perfectly adapted to all weathers in the aeons of God.

Now, when is our faith, like the centurion's, supreme? Why, just when it has nothing to lean upon, save the Bosom of God. It defies sense

because it clings to the skirts of the Almighty. Look you at the heavenly pioneers, and see, and know the hidings of their power. Do not the ages agree in calling Abraham "the father of the faithful"? How did this ancient man win his doctorate from the archives of eternity? "By faith Abraham, when he was called, obeyed to go out unto a place which he was to receive for an inheritance: and he went out, not knowing whither he went." Refusing chart or compass, scrip or staff, faith keeps step with God—a pilgrim of the infinite, unhurrying and unafraid. And when does Paul tower like a true superman? "And now, behold, I go bound in the spirit unto Jerusalem, not knowing the things that shall befall me there: save that the Holy Spirit testifieth unto me in every city, saying that bonds and afflictions abide me. But I hold not my life of any account as dear unto myself, so that I may accomplish my course, and the ministry, which I received from the Lord Jesus, to testify the Gospel of the grace of God." No wonder the centuries stand at attention as this faith-clad man comes flaming by! And of this same great society was my dear old friend, a good minister of Jesus Christ, and one who knew how to walk unassisted by the crutches of knowledge and kindred makeshifts. His other name was Reality. A lie could not live in his presence; a sham avoided him as a deadly terror; uncleanness feared him as vermin fear the sunlight. Smitten by disease, an operation was necessary. His

noble and devoted son brought him to one of the great surgeons of this city. Everything was in readiness; he was wheeled into the operating room; doctors and nurses were standing by; the assistant was about to administer the anesthetic when lo! a sudden command rang out from the patient. "Wait one minute!" he said. Then he sat up, straight and fearless, a prophet of the Most High, daring pain and death. In a clear, calm voice he continued: "I will lift up mine eyes unto the hills, from whence cometh my help. My help cometh from the Lord, who made heaven and earth. He will not suffer thy foot to be moved. He that keepeth thee will not slumber." The faces of physicians and nurses went soft and tearful; for here was a new, true preacher in the operating room, preaching from his pulpit of pain. Thus does faith—faith that smiles at distance and doom and death—faith in Christ unfurls its banners of bursting green upon the very bastions of desolation. "Lord, say the word"—and the fever shall cool, and matter shall yield, and space shall tingle with health, and death shall die, and Heaven shall bare its nutritious breasts of life. Whence I conclude: If God, the God of Eternity, speaks, all small talk,—whether scientific jargon, or drawing room gossip, or theologic quibble,—must instantly cease, convicted of its stupendous ignorance and proven inadequacy.

IV

Faith's final step is confirmed by its fruitage. "And they that were sent, returning to the house, found the servant whole." St. Matthew is more explicit still. He says: "And the servant was healed in the selfsame hour." Thus faith begins by hearing, incarnates itself in doing, honors God, if need be, by ignoring physical obstacles, and crowns itself by receiving Heaven's wholeness. I think we are indebted to St. Matthew for his checking-up method. It simply emphasizes the absolutely perfect economies practiced by the physical universe. The tides are never late, the stars are always on time. In one of our eastern universities, scientists were watching for a star due at 5:20 p. m. Their calculations were based upon a little book ten years old, the little book itself being based upon observations thousands of years old. The astronomer and his assistant made this agreement: At precisely 5:20 p. m. the astronomer was to call out, "Here!" and the assistant was to let a hammer fall upon a marble table at the same time. Slowly, almost painfully, the minutes sped away. The professor's eye was fastened upon the eye-piece of the telescope, the assistant's upon the hands of the clock. At last 5:18 and 5:19 ticked off and fell back into eternity. Then silence, broken only by racing seconds and throbbing hearts; and then at 5:20 p. m. the expected star shot over the spider-web line that stretched across the lens, the ham-

mer fell, and the man's voice called, "Here!"—*all in the selfsame second!*

Truly, God's trains of constellations and stars always arrive on schedule time. Therefore, do I mean to say that physical wholeness invariably accompanies true faith? Not at all! *It may,* but physical immortality was never a part of God's program for human beings. What I do mean to assert is this far more important truth: The very instant a soul repents and believes in Christ, forgiveness, wholeness, eternal life is mediated to that soul. The body *may* be cured, the soul *must* be cured. For the things that go on behind matter are of vaster import than the things that take place on the outside of matter. For example: Your name may be written upon the church register, a purely physical transaction; or, it may be written in the Book of Life, a grandly spiritual reality.

Moreover, is not this soldier's faith, in its abundant fruitage, at one with the faith of every supremely great soldier and soldiering soul? An American youth was sight-seeing in France. One day he stepped into a church. While gazing reverently about, a soldier entered. He was a quiet, gray man; and, though the collar of his shabby uniform bore the eagles of a general, only an orderly accompanied him. The youth was impressed by the promptness with which the soldier knelt in prayer; he was furthermore impressed by the length of time the man continued in prayer. For forty-five minutes that still, gray

man remained in the presence of God. Rising from his knees, he left the church and walked down the street. The American lad, knowing that here was a man, whoever he might be, who did not lead an impromptu prayer-life, followed him. Then the youth was quickly aware that this man's presence occasioned excitement: men saluted him with undisguised emotion, women and children regarded him with awe-struck faces. And why not? That "gray man of Christ" was General Ferdinand Foch. While seeking orders from the Lord Christ, his word was law to millions of men; his whisper set thousands of guns thundering holy wrath and righteous indignation from countless hills.

"Sight-seeing?" Yea, verily! What finer sight in the universe than a human being at prayer, than a soul consciously uncovering itself in the presence of God? Nature has no "sight" comparable to this. The sublimity of stars and oceans and mountains is dwarfed by the majesty of a soul bowed before its Maker. There is no hint in Scripture that all the matter in the universe, and all the myriad forms which matter has taken, ever caused God to "marvel"; but this centurion so impressed himself upon the Word made flesh, that, "when Jesus heard these things, He marvelled at him, and turned and said unto the multitude that followed Him, I say unto you, I have not found so great faith, no, not in Israel."

V

GOD'S UNSPEAKABLE GIFT

"And the angel said unto them, Be not afraid; for behold, I bring you glad tidings of great joy which shall be to all the people: for there is born to you this day in the city of David a Saviour, which is Christ the Lord."—St. Luke ii. 10, 11.

THE Incarnation is the divine way of recreating the universe afresh to every Christ-taught heart. At Bethlehem we see Heaven borrowing matter from earth through which to disclose its purpose toward men. Heretofore God hath uttered Himself in manifold ways. For interpreting eyes, Nature has ever quivered with a mysterious bloom; Something untold runs hintingly along its infinite acres of dust. Yet there are so many unlit bounds, so many galaxies that wheel and whirl, that men peer into the darkness and ask: "Is it fair? Is it kind? Is it paternal?" And there is no certain answer. But the soul cannot thrive on uncertainty. Carlyle held it to be a melancholy fact that when belief waxes uncertain, practice becomes unsound. To be sure, man will make daring and magnificent adventures when convinced of reality, even though the reality may not be fully grasped. Yet it is abidingly true that illusion cannot lure the soul beyond well-defined limits. Peering over the brink of perpetual un-

certainty, man loses his nerve; and when man loses his nerve he lets go of his illusion. Is not Nature's other name, when required to give a satisfying revelation of its Author, Illusion? Higher than Nature is God's theophany through great souls. Prophets, seers, sages, teachers, poets—these are the self-loaned voices by which God hath spoken words of life to human-kind. But they always fall short of the message men need to hear. Word and deed must be wedded in perfect character before the Voice of Eternity is convincingly authentic in the fields of time. A blended Shakespeare and Saint John will not do; nor will Platonic additions complete the House of Redemption. The builder of all things, who is God, must come and tabernacle in our dust. It is this—the coming of "the White Priest of Eternity"—that gave the angels their music; it is this which an apostle calls God's unspeakable gift—so wonderful that words cannot utter it; and it is this gift—its method, its universality, its uniqueness—I wish to consider with you.

I

Consider the method of God's gift. "There is born to you." That is, God entered the human scene by birth. It is amazing, almost bewildering, one of those deep-eyed facts which look us out of countenance. And yet is it not in keeping with cosmic moods and manners? Ask the physical forces how they broke bounds and came into

being. All make answer: "We came through the mystic gateway of birth; we were born." The old myth says that Minerva sprang full-armed from the head of Jupiter. The chief of gods suffered from a pain in the head until, finally, his head burst open and out stepped this lovely creature, Minerva, the personification of Wisdom. But the way of legend and the way of God in nature are far apart. Space itself is a kind of immeasurable womb impregnated by Deity. What are nebulæ but the germs of stars? Out there among the galaxies are those luminous clouds named nebulæ. Take that wonderful nebula in the constellation Orion, "which is larger than one million globes each twice as far through as the distance from the earth to the sun." Out of this nebulous matter astronomers can even now see stars being born, infant worlds rocked in the cradle of immensity. Cycles and agonies may pass before these star-children mature and die; they may shrink into a single sun or they may be organized into a gigantic constellation; but whatever their career and whatever use Almighty Wisdom has for them in the fields of space, they began their long history by birth. But if astronomy suggests vastness, chemistry reveals the marvel of the infinitesimal. For birth is also the watchword of kingdoms which can be seen only through the eyes of the microscope. How do molecules, atoms, electrons, with their tiny sparkling suns and circling planets, come into being? They too, are born—infinitely small

creations fathered by the Eternal Mind. It is scientifically true that all flesh is grass, that the entire life of our world is dependent upon the subtle chemistry of the grass. But it all goes back to the law of birth, the mystic union of germ and sperm cells, whether in plant or animal life. We know that male and female flowers sometimes grow upon the same tree, sometimes upon separate trees. Like human lovers, they have their matrimonial problems. But Nature, the kindly wise old Mother and ideal match-maker, calls in the services of a priestly wind or a magisterial butterfly or an obliging insect. They carry the pollen from bridegroom to bride; thus these floral lovers are duly married and thence blooming children are born. And so the enchanting history runs through the whole scheme of things, enfolding stars, atoms, plants, flowers, birds, and humans in its cryptic clasp.

The method of the incarnation, then, is in league with all of God's great first purposes and original laws. "There is *born* to you!" Here is the Eternal, the Boundless, the Illimitable consenting to be bound, consenting to be limited. God voluntarily submits Himself to the same law to which the universe is involuntarily and unconsciously submitted. How could it be otherwise, if God is really to humanize Himself? We did not need an apocalypse of power; matter and space throb with energy. We did not need a new cosmic catalogue of wisdom; the furrows of the cosmos are sown with seeds of thought which

science, philosophy, and art are only beginning to decipher. We did not need another sketch of beauty; there is beauty in every petal, every weed, every wing, every world, every human; for beauty, as music, may be found "in the mud and scum of things," if only, like Arthur Hallam, we bring an eye for all we see. No! What we wanted was the Heart of the Universe—not power, nor wisdom, nor beauty. "God so loved the world that He gave"—gave His heart, His soul, His passion, poured into our human years and fears and forms the heart-red tides of divine self-giving. Here is the wonder before which all wonders fail, before which all interpretations fall short. For neither theology nor science, nor philosophy, nor all combined, can make up a complete account of Bethlehem. And why? Because we are here confronted by the supreme example of biology. The universal life—life that thrills through galaxy, plant, and animal—here bursts into the perfectly human-divine. At last we are on the side of the angels, on the side of God, who is on the side of a forward-looking, immortal humanity.

There is another step, therefore, in this law of birth. It is that which is distinctly and romantically human. It is a commonplace, of course, that all human beings have come into this world through birth; but it is a commonplace only because our imaginations are dulled to the most vital and far-reaching of all higher beginnings. To stand by the cradle of a babe is to hear that ques-

tion, big with wonder, asked over the infant cradle of John the Baptist: "What then shall this child be?" Nobody can answer that question; it is so packed with meaning that it must make God Himself exceedingly anxious. History is seminal in the babes of the world. But altogether apart from philosophizing or sermonizing, I love to think of great men and women who were once little children. We speak of Homer, and instantly we picture the "deep-browed" bard, victimized as we are by Keats' unforgettable phrase. But why should we always think of Homer as a poet? He was a baby long before he was a poet, and he never could have been a poet had he not first been a baby. Ah, me! I had quite forgotten that this antique human nightingale was once a golden infant, that his mother wooed him and dandled him, that he learned to stand alone, that he played with toys. It is even so of all the names that have been plowed into the history of the world. Moses, David, Isaiah, Saint John, Saint Paul, Cromwell, Garibaldi, Washington, Lincoln—the only thing I dislike about these illustrious grown-ups is that they have too much overshadowed the puny, whimpering younglings they once were! And have we grown so utilitarian that we must value them exclusively for their service, forgetting the pity, the pathos, the birth-pang, the struggle, the helpless infant years that made their service possible? At any rate, I am glad the advent angel dipped toward the plains of Bethlehem to chant the wonder, the awe, the

glory of birth, of childhood, to those shepherds watching their flocks by night, listening as they did to music that first broke the skies that it might mend all broken hopes and hearts.

> "O Little Heart of God,
> Sweet intruding stranger,
> You are laughing in my human breast,
> A Christ Child in the manger."

Furthermore, birth is the process whereby man's soul moves out into the great ways of life and reality. "Ye must be born again," says the Eternal Christ. What is this that comes to the winter-bound heart and bids it sing? What is it that breathes the everlasting green upon spiritually desolate human climates? What is it that gathers up half-dreamed hopes, mere homeless things, and sets them fast in the Heart of Unchanging Love? What is it that spreads the sails of faith and turns men bravely toward uncharted regions, as they go "singing down the River of the Dead"? What is it that troubles and stirs the human chaos, lifts the darkness from the face of life's deep, and urges the soul on toward the breaking dawn of a perfect day? It is none other than the Spirit—the Everlasting God in Christ delivering the soul from death to life, God moving continuously upon the soul's turbid waters as in the beginning He moved upon the face of the formless deep. "Mysterious!" you exclaim; and so do I—mysterious as the four winds in the poem. The maiden wants to know how to make her lover prove true, and she prays the four

winds blowing through the sky to give her the secret. "To make your lover be true," whispered the south wind, "you must lay no kiss upon his mouth." The west wind said: "You must wound the heart within his breast." The east wind cried: "You must send him empty from the feast." The north wind counseled: "You must thrust him forth into the tempest; when you are more cruel than he is, then your lover will prove kind and true." And how does the Eternal Lover come to birth in the human heart? Certainly there is no fickleness, no inconstancy; but there is mystery—deep, vital, wind-haunted mystery. "Marvel not that I said unto thee, Ye must be born again. The wind bloweth—the Spirit breatheth—where it will, and thou hearest the voice thereof, but knoweth not whence it cometh, and whither it goeth: so is every one that is born of the Spirit." The divine manner of giving is the birth-method, a truth to which most Christians have failed to do justice in their thinking, a truth which has been faultlessly expressed by one of the great woman-souls of the world:

"No sudden thing of glory and fear
Was the Lord's coming; but the dear
Slow Nature's days followed each other
To form the Saviour from His Mother
—One of the children of the year.

"The earth, the rain, received the trust,
The sun and dews, to frame the Just.
He drew His daily life from these,
According to His own decrees
Who makes man from the fertile dust.

"Sweet summer and the winter wild,
These brought Him forth, the Undefiled.
The happy Springs renewed again
His daily bread, the growing grain,
The food and raiment of the Child."

II

Disclosing the method of God's unspeakable gift, the advent angel also reveals the divine inclusiveness: "I bring good tidings of great joy which shall be to all the people." I wonder if a message has ever been so foully misread, so grossly misinterpreted as this one? God says: *"All the people."* "No," answers man, "that means *some* of the people—the people belonging to my set, or sect, or nation." God says: *"All the people."* Man says: "That must mean me—big, egotistic, pompous me!" And lo! some thick-headed king or stupid emperor or beastly kaiser turns wire-tapper, cuts in, and says: "Now, my beloved subjects, you have misunderstood. God does not say all the people; what He does say is this: He means all the people through his majesty, the King of Fools, the Lord of Spludge and Splutter, who happens to be my own sordid, villainous Self." Unfortunately, the people, instead of flinging these fool-king words back into the teeth whence they came like a serpent's hiss, have too often swallowed them as if they were luscious fruits dropped from Eden trees. Why, the whole king-business would be incredible if it were not historically and unspeakably tragical.

How and when did kings begin to be, anyway? Nobody can put his hand on the exact date, it was so long, long ago. But your Twentieth Century emperor had his beginnings not in the Twelfth Century, when that black plague named Hohenzollernism is supposed to have begun cursing the earth, but away back countless centuries before. Your emperor really began with the tribe. He happened to be the strongest human brute among his uncivilized kind. Not by the grace of God, but by the sheer might of his brawn, did he get himself appointed all-highest of his savage community. Next, in the flight of centuries, he is king not of the tribe, but of the nation. In a word, he is the so-called strong man or king-man of the nation, though he has not infrequently been the biggest fool and the meanest man in the nation, and, to do him complete justice, in the entire century of which he was a part. Thus, from the strong man in the tribe and the strong man in the nation, we have evolved the strong nation in the world. Now Germany claims to be that nation. Measured by certain standards, she unquestionably merits the title. Is Germany strong? So is the tornado, and almost as unmoral. Is Germany strong? So is the lion's den, and the wolf's pack, and the shark's school; but all together—let us not slander the dumb brutes—could not have wrought such devastation; or wallowed in such orgies of beastiality, as has this soulless, inhuman Germany.

Now this is the doctrine, translated in national and human terms, of the struggle for life, the survival of the fittest. So far as it goes, it is true doctrine, but it does not go far enough nor deep enough. It is not the whole of the universe nor the final interpretation of human history. God has ordained another and a higher law than the struggle for life; it is the struggle for the life of others. God has ordained another and a higher law than the survival of the fittest; it is the survival of the best. It is not true that in the struggle for life the fittest, if by the fittest you mean the physically strongest,—which is not the Darwinistic idea, but the German perversion thereof —survives. Consider the great oak and pine forests of Germany, the noble elms in the north of France, the splendid old elms of London gardens and parks. Philip Henry Gosse, in his "Romance of Natural History," says that millions of these majestic trees have been done to death by a species of extremely small beetle. Depositing its minute eggs in the bark, the larvæ in due course penetrate both the bark and wood. Then do these magnificent trees, which have defied the storms of centuries, go down before creatures that scarcely shadow a microscope. The giant of the sea is the whale; but this monster of the deep fears the little narwhal, with his pointed, twisted tusk, more than he fears man, with his fleets and harpoons. According to his own confession, one of the most surprising things Darwin ever saw, is the South American sea-weed, growing and

flourishing amid ocean breakers. He says that no mass of rock can long resist these tremendous assaults of the sea; and yet this fragile weed, like a baby rocked in a cradle by its mother, laughs with the joy of life to the deep-toned chant of the ocean billows. Why, the Seven Seas, says Sir J. W. Dawson, "are in their present extent but of yesterday when compared with minute and feeble organisms that creep on their sands or swim in their waters."

We must gratefully accept all the light that science can throw upon life and destiny. But we must not forget that where science ends, reality begins; where the physical measuring line falls short, the supersenuous and eternal go reckoning triumphantly on. When knowledge falls exhausted, faith spreads its wings toward the unknown and inexhaustible. Herein does the universality of God's giving put all man-made measurements to shame. "He that hath been cradled in majesty," says Glanville, "will not leave the throne to play with beggars." Is that so, and in the light of Bethlehem? Well, my God comes and plays with beggars, who in turn topple thrones over and proclaim good tidings of great joy to *all* the people. God's celestial beggars are in the unbroken line of angelic succession. The Nature of Things, which is the Heart of God, is too strong for the mere strong man or brute force in any form. And humanity, just because Deity aches through and urges it forward, will finally cast its iron burden of the brute individ-

ual and the brute nation thirty thousand leagues beneath the sea of oblivion. Here is a gleam flashing out of No Man's Land. A French boy, who went unwounded through the battle of the Marne, was carrying a wounded officer to the rear. He was stopped by a wounded Englishman, who pleaded for drink and food. "All right," said Berger, "I will come back." He did come back. While he was lifting a bottle to the lips of the bleeding officer, three of his fingers were shot away. Still insisting on giving aid, he was shot in the thigh. Now the two of them were wounded—two mutilated Good Samaritans hobbling about in No Man's Land. For just then they heard the voice of a wounded German begging for drink. They crawled to his side, and they fainted. All night long the great guns roared above the three of them—Frenchman, Englishman, German. But louder than the roar of the guns was the silence of this lyric of brotherhood. With dawn came the Uhlans. Berger cried to a passing officer for water. The Uhlan answered the boy's plea with a leveled pistol when lo! something divine flashed out in No Man's Land. As the Uhlan's gaze wandered, he saw his dead German comrade, and lying by his side was the French boy's emptied flask. That sight melted even the Uhlan, giving him a heart of flesh for a heart of stone. He bent over; he gave the French lad drink; he saluted; he turned to the German lines with a look that words must leave untold. True, man's inhuman-

ity to man makes countless millions mourn; but one big, rich, glowing human kindness gives God, angels, and men another chance to bring in the Eternal Dawn!

III

Consider, also, the absolute uniqueness of God's gift. "For there is born to you this day in the city of David a Saviour, who is Christ the Lord." Amid all the worlds, this is the culmination of creative grandeur. Salvation is equal to creation; Saviourhood ranks with Fatherhood; both are the outbreathed emotions and passions of the One true and living God. "Thou shalt call His name Jesus," said the angel, "for it is He that shall save His people from their sins." Before there was any sunlight on the sea, before there was any wind-music astir in the meadows of morning, His name was rolled "to rhythms of eternity." More ancient than time, æonianly young, aboundingly human, unutterably divine, the Christ assumes our nature and makes it worthy to stand before God in the hinterlands of glory. Neither king nor teacher nor reformer is He; or, rather, He is all these, and so much more, that these names and offices are but the flying dust clinging to His robes of majesty, as He comes with crimsoned garments, glorious in His apparel, marching in the greatness of His strength, speaking in righteousness, mighty to save! God can shape up a king or a teacher or a reformer as easily as He can scoop up a sea or

hammer out a star; but since man was created in the divine image and a robe of dust woven for his immortal spirit to gesture in through the years of time, Christ Jesus, the Saviour, is the goal toward which God hath ever moved men and angels. Therefore, the latest, as the oldest Gospel, is this: We mortals must climb to the feet of God through the Saviourhood of Mary's Son—Christ in us, the hope of glory, in time and in eternity.

The uniqueness of God's gift, then, is this: He gives us Himself in Christ. Let us not mince words here; half truths may be spiritual highwaymen despoiling us of Christian reality. Grateful for the manifestations of God in every realm—in nature, in friendship, in home, in society, in high and holy souls—yet what are they all compared to God in Christ? At best, they are variations of the tune, sweet, rich, and beautifully human, it may be; but they are not the tune itself. "I and My Father are one"—this is the deific score from which flows the heavenly harmony. For that saying the Jews took up stones to stone Him; for that saying, also, every succeeding century has had its disputatious Jews hurling their stones at Him. But no matter! Neither material nor spiritual stones can destroy the indestructible. "I and My Father are one"—there it is, for time and eternity, as near as thought is to mind, as near as fragrance to the rose, as near as sunlight to the sun. Christ is God's "unworn ritual of eternal things" to man

because in Christ, and Christ alone, God gets the "underhold" on human nature and lifts it into acceptable communion with Himself. Why, when I read the Annunciation, the Magnificat, the Benedictus, the Nunc Dimittis, my imagination takes fire and I seem to go over the top of things into the presence of the pre-incarnate purpose and counsel. "The fullness of time hath come," said God, "and I, the Creative Word, am going to earth to become flesh." Instantly the heavenly societies were thrown into a tumult of holy eagerness and excitement. Gabriel, Raphael, Michael, and Uriel—archangels dazzling with "bright shoots of everlastingness"—approached the throne of God and prayed: "Grant unto us, O Jehovah, the privilege of descending to earth that we may work out the salvation of man." But God said: "No! You shining ones may have part in the work; you may be couriers announcing the Good News to come; but no archangel can take My place—I, the Eternal and Everlasting God, must undertake this mission Myself." Next came cherubim and seraphim, praying that they might come to earth for man's redemption. But they were likewise restrained by the redemptive passion surging in the Divine Nature. "No," said God, "you are ministering spirits to the heirs of salvation; you may sing in Time, as you have sung in Eternity, the glory of Heaven's disclosure to the sons of men; but neither archangel nor angel nor seraph nor cherub may take My place in yonder manger."

Therefore, when God looked the universe through and wondered that there was none to help or uphold, His own arm brought salvation. And behold! that Holy Thing, that made a woman cry and angels sing, hath mysteriously come from behind the stars into our humanity and worn it up the Hills of Light, whence it began, and toward which the whole creation moves. Thanks be to God for His Unspeakable Gift!

VI

TWO PICTURES OF GOD*

"The eternal God is thy dwelling place, and underneath are the everlasting arms."—DEUT. xxxiii. 27.

GOD'S forward movements for the world are first sown, like seeds, in the rich soil of great human personality. Intrusting His thoughts and purposes to a perceiving and responsive human, God introduces new epochs and larger orders for the groping millions. Thus, certain aspects of the Divine Mind got their foothold in our racial consciousness through a man named Moses. It is a part of the pathos of the Deity that He is compelled to wait for a man ample and tall enough to reach up and lay hold of His purposes and bring them down to earth. According to our methods of computation, the August Father waited a long time for Moses to come along, seize God's thoughts, and make them current coin for all generations. Therefore, to measure Moses, and all opulent humans, we must consider their infinite backgrounds, their relations to God. Ultimately, men are big or little according as their thoughts of God are big or little. "Learn to think magnificently of God,"

---

*Preached in Tompkins Avenue Congregational Church, March 10, 1918.

pleaded William Law. So Moses walks the centuries in his imperial ideas of God. It is not enough to say that his vision of God was millenniums in advance of his generation; we must add that, in certain spiritual and ethical conceptions, Moses has not, and can never be, outgrown, because his are the foundations of morality.

My text is an instance of Moses' mighty vision of God. His life work is done; he has "laid the world away"; his leadership is to be taken by another. How does he behave? Is he querulous, fretful, jealous? Does he think the world is going to smash because he has received orders to retire? Not at all! Death affords him opportunity to assert the poise, serenity, and majesty of his triumphant faith and regnant personality. Speaking to his people, he says: "The eternal God is thy dwelling place, and underneath are the everlasting arms." Richard Watson Gilder defines the sonnet as "a little picture painted well." Here, then, in this poetry of Heaven, is not one, but two, pictures of God; and they are not little, though they are painted exceedingly well.

I

In this first thought of God—a kind of medallion of Deity—we have God pictured as a home: "The eternal God is thy dwelling-place." The phrase is rich in itself, but the ideas it contains are of that superlative quality which partakes of all true thinking of God. The foremost idea is,

of course, personality. Unless we are to relinquish our mental and spiritual grip upon the very idea of God, we must think of Him in terms of personalism. "Complete personality," says Lotze, "can be in God only, while to man can belong but a weak and faint copy thereof." Certainly our own knowledge or experience of personality does not compass the personality of God. Far from it! Rather, He is all that we can think or imagine of the best in human personality, and so much more that thought and imagination are dazzled by the overwhelming richness of His nature. And if there be those who are constrained to pity us for such anthropomorphous notions, they are simply wasting pity upon the laws essential to human thought. Moreover, the supremely satisfying apology for anthropomorphism is the Incarnation itself. God became flesh that we might assuredly know and believe that He is not altogether unlike personality as we see its manifestations in human beings. You think, you feel, you will: that is your badge of personality. Is there, then, no such thing as thought, emotion, will, in the being of God? Verily, God is the self-conscious Person—Thinker, Lover, Actor—who wears the universe as a garment.

The second idea is permanence. "The *eternal* God," says Moses. The phrase must have struck into the Hebrew consciousness with delicious poignancy. The Jews to whom Moses spoke were a nomadic people, dwelling in tents. They were here today, on the morrow they were gone, hav-

ing no permanent abiding place. Footsore, weary, doomed to unappeased wanderlust, these pilgrims of the desert must have sighed for a refuge which would not forsake them with the breaking day. "You have it," said Moses, "but not in material things. Your residence is not in the stuff of the stars, nor in the sands of the desert, nor in the gold of the earth, nor in the corn and wine of Canaan. These all change. Against the background of eternity, oceans, mountains, nations, and cities are fleeting shadows, like your own earthly stay. But there is a hiding place, for you and for all generations, a Home older than the galaxies, more refreshing than the dews of Hermon—God's everlasting, eternal heart-home."

Let us remind ourselves, my friends, that this dear truth, far from being obsolete, is our only genuine consolation. Is it not this alone that extracts the irony from the modern man's career? Multiplied a thousand-fold in material goods, your modern man must either feed upon this nourishing truth or condemn himself to the bitter poverty of spiritual orphanhood. All the artificialities of time are blown away by a single breath of eternity. The conclusions of the supreme souls concerning the futility of earthly gains, apart from devotion to God and humanity, are absolutely correct. This single consideration proves it: *The emptiness of it all in the regard of those who possess it all!* No one knows as well as the rich man how little riches alone contribute

toward making life joyous. No one knows as well as the learned man how little learning in itself avails toward bringing unalloyed satisfaction. A man may gain the world and lose it all, and not lose much—this is one of those infallible moral judgments delivered by human experience; a man may gain the world and lose his soul, defraud himself of a permanent spiritual estate for time and eternity—ah! for this there is no compensation within the ranges of thought! Therefore, your palace-dweller, quite as much as your desert-wanderer, requires "a house not made with hands, eternal, in the heavens."

There is yet another idea in this lovely old picture of God as a home. It is the thought of spaciousness. "The eternal God is thy dwelling-place." How inexpressibly dear are the thoughts of home, our earthly dwelling-place! And yet, alongside the august conceptions of home contained in revelation, how narrow, how limited, they are! Some have no vision of a home beyond the four walls from which they have caught a pardonably domestic blindness. But it need hardly be said that the Biblical and spiritual conceptions of home are infinitely larger. As human life steadily goes toward spiritualization, if it goes truly, so our very social modes and earthly economies are exalted to those spiritual adaptations in which life itself partakes ever more freely and richly of the nature of God. As man recedes from the coasts of the outer infinite, he draws near, and ever nearer, the portals of the

inner homelikeness. Here, then, is one of those vast spiritual leaps which, though it makes the mind somewhat dizzy, yet the mind refuses to let go of it, despite the attendant dizziness. Just let the thought look you straight in the face for a moment. Home—a place of walls, a flower-plot, pictures, books, music. Higher still, home—a trysting-place of wedded love, birth, prayer, happiness, sorrow, death. Such is our dwelling-place as we know it here. "The eternal God is thy dwelling-place"—what do we know of that? Very little, and also very much. In comparison with those dear dead who have lived with God so long that they are sweetly familiar with heavenly retreats of which we are ignorant, our knowledge of that life is small indeed. But in the sense that the mind expands to meet the challenge of immortality, that the mind inherently feels it was not born to die, refusing to be overawed or domineered by countless orbs of matter, the mind knows that for which words are not satisfactory instruments of expression. Does not life outrun thought, and does not thought outrun words? "Knowledge," said Thomas Davidson, "is the consciousness of our distinctness from the Infinite. Faith is the consciousness of our oneness with the Infinite." Those sentences do not simply crack the whip of Aristotle over us, as William James said Davidson was wont to do in that little company of Boston friends. There is incisive discrimination here, not only in the use of words, but in the reality expressed. It voices the

deepest, finest things to which the human consciousness is capable of offering hospitality. For it is profoundly true that where the clumsy feet of knowledge falter, the swift wings of faith readily fly. Hence all those glorious mysticisms and unscientific experiences, which large sections of the modern mind have neither the capacity nor the patience to appreciate. Religion is an invitation to tear down all limiting and material walls and venture out into deathless reality. Let God be thanked that He has matched us with such spiritual greatness. And let us not be awed by the spatial as we rejoice in the spaciousness of our divine home. For true religion wreathes space with a smile, puts good cheer into the frowning countenance of midnight, croons a lullaby of home over the loneliness in the universe. Do you remember De Quincey's description of that London house he slept in? Having run away from school, he was finally caught in grim London's horrid, clinquant show. Tramping the streets or lounging in the parks all day, he came at nightfall to that dingy mansion. It was leased to a certain Jew who, to escape creditors, never slept twice in the same place, and never at all in this old house in which his pawnshop was. Now the sole night occupant before De Quincey came was a poor, frightened, half-starved waif of a girl, a mere child. There was no furniture in the house—no chairs, no tables, no beds, no lights—just great dismal halls and darkened stairways and unlit rooms, through which rats and ghosts,

too, according to the child, held nightly carnival. Wrapped in some tattered, filthy blankets found in the garret, De Quincey and the little child would lie down upon the floor and sleep. Many years after, De Quincey would walk by this mansion, and lo! it was beautifully illuminated, happy human beings moved about in the richly furnished rooms, now and then carriages drew up in front, discharging invited guests. What a contrast to those gruesome nights of old? Yet the walls had not been enlarged, the stairways were unchanged, and so were the halls, doorways, and windows. What had happened? Why, all that dingy, unlit space had been transfigured by spaciousness. So does the thought of God make luminous the soul, imparting a winsome home-likeness to the universe. "The eternal God is thy dwelling-place"—beyond space, beyond terror, beyond death, beyond the glory of setting suns, beyond the spring of golden mornings, beyond everything there is this Heavenly Beyond—"The eternal God is thy dwelling-place."

II

God as a nursing mother—that is our second picture of the Divine Nature in this holy outbreak of poetic and spiritual tenderness. "And underneath are the everlasting arms." It is a photograph from life. Here is a mother nursing her babe. While drinking in the mother's milk —the white wine of infant life—the babe's tiny

arm may be thrown clingingly about the mother's neck. But the child's security is not dependent upon the child's frail clasp. The babe is safe—safe against that mothering breast—because the mother's arms are underneath the little body. Now for the babe, substitute the universe and all within it; for the mother, substitute the eternal God, with His everlasting arms and laws, and you have the seer's thought.

Consider, therefore, the priority of the divine embrace. God is underneath the total life, energy, and being of all worlds and all intelligences. There are no strayed and straying phyical forces. Wild and terrible though they seem, as they operate in the cosmos with atomic subtlety or astronomic fury, at times impressing man with their anarchic strangeness and horror, still they are neither horrible nor strange to the God who created and sustains them. They are because He is; and before they were, He was. Oh, no! There are no lost planets in the immeasurable folds of space. God shepherds their changes, and when He calls, they answer: "Here we are!" There are no hidden, unseen electrons whirling in chemic galaxies. They are all known to God, all are seen by Him, all are numbered by Him, His everlasting arms are underneath them all. God is underneath our birth. "Thou hast knit me together," says the psalmist, "in my mother's womb." Prior to all begetting fathers and all conceiving mothers, is the Holy God, curiously, secretly working in the lowest parts

of the earth. God is underneath our sin. While there are no physical worlds gone wrong, where is there a single human world gone absolutely right? We have all gone astray, we have all lost our moral orbits. But the God of Calvary, the Lamb slain from before the foundation of the world, He is underneath all the black abysses of sin into which we have plunged, seeking to rescue and whiten us in the cleansing streams which burst from His crimson fountain. God is underneath our sorrow. No human being journeys from womb to grave and remains a stranger to sorrow in some form. We all have a rendezvous with suffering and gloom, and sometime we must keep our engagement with these mysterious messengers of night. Blessed, therefore, is he who goes forth to meet his strange visitants fortified by the brave and inspiring conviction that they may be God's angels in disguise, and through whose transfiguring power outer gloom will goldenly change to inner dawn. "I live," said Carlyle, "you know where, in Meshech, which they say signifies prolonging; in Kedar, which signifies blackness; yet the Lord forsaketh me not." The unforsaking God—that is the soul's hope and ultimate coronation! Perplexity, pain, ignorance, sorrow—blackness! Is that all? And is there nothing more? Why, these are only vanishing margins, thin beginnings in the zone of everlasting reality. Did Carlyle say, Blackness? And do you, too, say, Blackness? Well, say it out—ringing, resonant, clamant, loud enough to

be heard at a great distance! But after you have pronounced blackness, lending it all the sepulchral intonation of which you are capable, will you not just pause long enough to also say: *"The darkness and the light are both alike to Thee?"* The mystics all know that life's blackest midnights are lined with God's silver dawns. It is the divine news their souls have caught from beyond the hills of time and sense. God is underneath our death. Normally, we have no more to do with dying than we have with being born. Indeed, death may be, and ought to be, just a larger birth. Death is one of many sacred events in the career of a soul journeying out of the unseen into the seen, and then back again, through paths of dust and decay, into the invisible.

> "In death's unrobing room we strip from 'round us
> The garments of mortality and earth;
> And, breaking from the embryo state that bound us
> Our day of dying is our day of birth."

It is the behaviour of the soul between birth and death—in a word, the quality of life we secrete out of the experiences of life—this it is that stamps our departure from earth and our entrance into the spiritual world with momentous solemnity. Meantime, is it not consoling to reflect that death and its issues are no surprise to God? When men keep their spiritual life in good repair—that is, when they accept Christ, trust Christ, and serve Christ—they yield themselves to God's embrace with the confiding simplicity

of a tired child caught on the pillowing breast of motherhood.

To the divine priority, we must add the further thought of the unweariedness of God's embrace. "And underneath are the everlasting arms." Everlasting arms must be arms that last forever. They cannot grow weary, nor wear out, nor fall paralyzed under their eternal burdens. What a blessed thought! On every hand are signs of wearing, worn-out things. There are hints of decay in the cosmos. Stars are born, reach maturity, and die. Who stokes the fires of the sun? How are all these colossal physical forces united to the primary, original Life from which they derive their being? Who understands the processes by which the creative, Holy Spirit of God enters into and energizes the far-flung systems? To suggest such thoughts is but to remind ourselves of our pitiable ignorance. But they remind us, also, of this magnificent and heartening conception: The arms underneath them all are everlasting, incapable of fatigue. Everlasting arms—and we have order out of chaos. Everlasting arms—and the wheeling systems keep majestically on their appointed courses. Everlasting arms—and Spring, Summer, Autumn, and Winter fail not. God be praised for the springtide that has already set in! Grim old Winter—especially the one just passing—has wrinkled us somewhat, but the new-coming Spring, thank God, is going to conceal all the wrinkles beneath wreaths of green! "I begin

through the grass once again to be bound to the Lord"—there may be a finer line in English literature than that, but I hardly know where to find it, unless it be this tuneful line of Sidney Lanier: "The little green leaves would not let me alone in my sleep." Yes, the green is sure to come back, because the everlasting arms are underneath the forces that touch the dead things into growing, green things.

Finally, and by way of application, the text contains a two-fold message. Here is, first, encouragement to the nation resolved upon righteousness and justice for itself and for all mankind. The everlasting arms are underneath America, as she goes forth not only to make democracy safe for the world, but to make right and godliness the only things in which the world may safely trust for the solution of its gigantic problems. Away, therefore, with the calamity-howler, the Bolshevistic dreamer, and the pacifistic copperhead! It were better to slay even the dreamer than permit the dreamer's truth to be trampled under the Hun's iron heel for centuries to come. Living in a grand and awful time, let God be thanked, as young Rupert Brooke exclaimed in his glorious death-shout. Who matched us with His hour! Are men saying that the end of all things is at hand? "In all ages," replies the philosophic historian, "men, bewildered by the vision of great changes, have pronounced the doom of the world because they were not able to see or understand the process of

its salvation." But whether or not the end of all things is at hand—I am no authority on matters hid in the deliberately concealed counsels of God—we must see to it that the end of German militarism, with its fiendish horrors, is at hand! If Gabriel blows his trumpet, how could he find us engaged in a holier task than hewing in pieces the German Agag? Failing in our present duty, we shall brand ourselves traitors to the dead and the unborn. Oh, America! it may be that God has called thee to the throne of right for such a time as this! Moses dies, but Israel goes on, and Americans die, but America survives. Do you not recall July 4th, 1826? Surely, it was one of the strangest, most suggestive days in our entire history. On that day John Adams and Thomas Jefferson both died. Think of it! It was not enough that John Adams should be our second President; he was also the father of our sixth President, John Quincy Adams. I suppose more Presidents did not hail from the Adams family simply because there were not enough Adamses to go round. Whether we like it or not—and now that they are all safe, sound, and dead, it were unbecoming of us to dislike it—the Presidential bee certainly did buzz in the Adams bonnet! But on July 4th, 1826, exactly fifty years after the signing of the Declaration of Independence, and on the nation's Independence Day, mark you, Thomas Jefferson, the author of the Declaration of Independence, and John Adams, two founders and former Presidents of the infant

Republic, were gathered to their fathers. What do you think the prophets of ill omen prophecied on that eventful day? Well, don't take the time to look it up. Just devoutly thank the good God that He did not create the world to fit in with some people's ideas! No! The Adamses and Jeffersons and Lincolns may die, but America, if she remains true to the great souls who brought her into being, shall not die, until the Judge of the quick and the dead pronounces the doom of all earthly things. We have been pushed from behind, as it were, into this holy war, and we will battle on for the freedom of the world until the enemies of freedom are coffined in unresisting dust. "To such a task," says our Chief Magistrate, the noblest expositor of America's soul that America has ever had, "we can dedicate our lives and our fortunes, everything that we are and everything that we have, with the pride of those who know that the day has come when America is privileged to spend her blood and her might for the principles that gave her birth and happiness, and the peace which she has treasured."

Here is a message, also, for the individual. "We mortal millions live alone," sang Matthew Arnold. May it not be more truly said: We live together, but we die alone? Yet God's heart-home and the everlasting arms are more than sufficient for both the loneliness of life and death. "In My Father's house are many abiding places," says the Lord of Eternity. Recently, I lost a noble friend, or, rather, Heaven gained a new and

beautiful citizen. Waking up between midnight and morning, he was asked by a loved one: "How are you feeling?" He replied: "Much better now"—and in that instant he was gone! Gone where? Why, gone Home—gone in out of the storm, and the night, and the pain. One morning I met Doctor Albert J. Lyman—a human synonym for knightly goodness and Christlike loving kindness—in Montague street. In the course of our conversation, he said: "Mr. Shannon, this is a great day for the re-rendition of old truths in new forms." I began pulling out my pocket journal; I knew I was receiving a verbal jewel mined in a great and crystal clear intellect. "Please say that again, Doctor," said I. He repeated it, beautifully unconscious that he had expressed the mood of an age in a few thought-laden seconds. Well, one day Doctor Lyman tenderly laid his hand upon the shoulder of a very dear friend of mine and said, with something unearthly in his vision: "My dear man, I want to live next door to you Up There!" Truly, it will be worth going all the way to Heaven to take up our residence next door to some who are already there! But as mother and father are dearer than all our memories of them, so God is better than all our pictures of Him. Therefore, in this dread and glorious time when death is doing a heavy business on our planet, we will still sing of the beautiful dead; sing as Sigourney Thayer has immortally sung; and sing all the more lustily because the gloom of this sonnet's octave is

touched to radiance and rapture in the enchanting sestet:

"I feared the lonely dead, so old were they,—
  Decrepit, tired beings, ghastly white,
  With withered breasts and eyes devoid of sight,
Forever mute beneath the sodden clay;
I feared the lonely dead, and turned away
  From thoughts of somber death and endless night;
  Thus, through the dismal hours I longed for light
To drive my utter hopelessness away.
But now my nights are filled with flowered dreams
  Of singing warriors, beautiful and young;
Strong men and boys within whose eyes there gleams
  The triumph song of worlds unknown, unsung;
Grim death has vanished, leaving in its stead
The shining glory of the living dead."

VII

THE WORLD'S GREATEST LITERATURE

"Ye are our epistle, written in our hearts, known and read of all men; being made manifest that ye are an epistle of Christ, ministered by us, written not with ink, but with the Spirit of the living God; not in tables of stone, but in tables that are hearts of flesh."—II Cor. iii. 2, 3.

HOW singular that Paul should use the metaphor of an epistle, or a book, in connection with Christ! He never wrote a letter, nor a poem, nor a science, nor a philosophy. So far as we know, He literally wrote only once. And then His writing was not upon vellum, or papyrus, or paper—it was in the dust. Why is this? Why should the Being who has inspired more books, more music, more art, than any other, refuse to be classified among mere authors? Well, man can make a book; only God can make and redeem a soul. Anybody can write upon paper; only Christ can write forgivingly, livingly, upon the spirit of man. The world will never want for men who can make books; the world will always want the Saviour who writes His message upon the human soul. Thus my text suggests the theme, "The World's Greatest Literature." Christians are in the world to be expositors of that which cannot be written into books. They are living epistles, letters of life.

I

The first chapter in this lustrous book of life may be entitled, "Universal Legibility." "You are known and read of all men," says Paul. Now, for the understanding of great literature, two things are essential: first, you must love it, and second, you must know the language. Whatever other conditions are requisite, these two are indispensable. There must be a passionate love of literature before it can bare its inmost beauty to the student's heart. The poem, the essay, the philosophy—all stand over against their readers saying: "Give me thine heart, else I cannot give thee my inspiration." As for a knowledge of the particular language in which supreme literature finds its expression, too much can scarcely be said. You think Homer is great as he rhythms along in Pope's translation. You can only know how truly great Homer is by setting the lips of your soul sweetly close to the original Greek fountains and allow the Hellenic wine to flow untainted by foreign verbs and alien nouns. "But," you say, "what about Keats? He didn't know Greek." More's the pity! Even genius must acknowledge the limitations imposed by ignorance. Talk about knowing Dante through Carey? A lover might as well boast of understanding the kiss of his beloved when delivered by his best friend.

Yet, as the apostle suggests, there is a book that transcends all written literature. It is the

book of life; it is a volume that defies the barriers of language; it is universally legible. For when a man is possessed by the love of God, he may be known and read of all men. A divine transparency breaks through his human molds; a heavenly accent sweetens the inflections of his voice. A translator, a partaker of the divine nature, he is spiritually translatable, he readily passes into all the parts of universal, world-wide speech. Consider this well: it will incite you to a more Christlike devotion. Here is this book on natural science. I think the man who wrote it understands it; there are other men, patiently trained as this author has been trained, who also understand its terminology. Yet, after all, it is a comparatively small company that can appreciate this book. But suppose that the man himself is a righteous, gentle, strong, Christlike human. His eyes are deep wells of lovingkindness; his face is "a well-written page"; his voice is keyed to harmonies beyond the discordant tones of earth. Does it require a scientist to understand the man? Why, everybody can read him: the wise, the ignorant, the joyful, the sorrowing, the rich, the poor. He is a Christianized human document—the most inspiring, the most needed, the most enduring piece of literature within the worlds. Sometimes I walk across the Manhattan Bridge with a friend. I have been especially impressed by his interest in children, both boys and girls. He invariably receives from these little ones what he gives—kindness, friendliness, good-

will. But do you think these untutored waifs of the street could understand my friend's brilliant books? Certainly not! But they can do a more essential thing: they can read him; his goodness is so apparent that it arrests even boys and girls at play. It is great to write a book; it is infinitely greater to write a life in terms and tones of love. I have another friend—a retired banker—one of the most Christlike souls I have ever known. He loves to walk in Prospect Park. Sometime ago a company of friends met him there. Among them was a mother with her little girl, who is very shy. While they were all talking, the child stole close up to the big man, and, taking his hand in her own, began to caress it. When God writes His signature in a rare volume of flesh and blood, even reticent little children can understand its distinguishing miracle of beauty.

The legibleness of Christ-grown men and women is especially manifested in mission fields. There, as nowhere else, it is the flesh-and-blood book that counts. The Chinese were unable to read the Christian Bible, but they could read Robert Morrison. What did the poor Indians know of the Thirteenth Chapter of First Corinthians? Nothing—until David Brainerd lived it out amid their want and woe. Henry Martyn, Alexander Duff, James Calvert, John G. Paton, James Chalmers—what were they but living epistles, known and read of all kinds and conditions of benighted men, women, and children?

And did not Henry M. Stanley go into the wilds of Africa to see and read that wonderful epistle of the divine love in the person of David Livingstone? I hold here in my hand a rare book, the gift of Doctor Gunsaulus. It is the geography of Claudius Ptolemy, printed at Venice in 1597. Mr. Voynich, an expert in such matters, says it is a fine copy in contemporary vellum. Inside the binding are small fragments of late thirteenth or early fourteenth century manuscript on vellum. The work is divided into two parts, being translated from Latin into Italian by Leonardo Cernotti. Now, if you can read early fourteenth century Italian, this book may be understood by you. In other words, to thoroughly appreciate Ptolemy's book, you must know the language. There is no other way—it is one of the laws of literature. But Paul suggests that there is thought too great for language, life that breaks bounds and escapes the power of words: it is the life of God written in the mind, the will, the heart, the imagination. "By this," said the Master, "shall all men know that ye are My disciples, if ye have love one to another." Love interprets when everything else is cold and dead.

II

A second chapter in life's greatest literature is on "The Unmistakable Authorship." "Being made manifest," says Paul, "that ye are an epistle of Christ." This matter of style is of first im-

portance in literature. We know certain authors by their style. We say: "That sounds like Shakespeare, or Milton, or Ruskin, or Stevenson." It may be consoling to some of us to note, in passing, that "R. L. S." was a miserable speller. It was the work of Sir Sidney Colvin to correct Stevenson's orthography, but not his style. He understood the meaning of words and strung them together so musically that only a presumptuous hand would undertake to alter them. And as the apparel oft proclaims the man, so the style oft proclaims the author's title to distinction.

Likewise, in the literature of the soul, style is a foremost consideration. I open this great human book, the author of my text. Who wrote this epistle named Paul? Where did he get that heavenliness of temper, that majestic contempt for the things of the world, that passion for seeing men reconciled unto God, that spiritual stride which makes him at once the wonder and despair of the ages? Why, Christ created Paul; only Christ could create Paul; Paul proves Christ as a flower proves the sun. The difference in Paul and Plato is not that one was a Jew, the other a Greek; the difference is this: one was a disciple of Christ, the other was not. Smitten down upon the road to Damascus, Paul gets out into the eternal highways. And does he not know who set his feet in the way everlasting? Verily, he does! "And I said, Who art Thou, Lord? And the Lord said, I am Jesus whom

thou persecutest." Paul did not start for Damascus and just stumble into glory; he was bound for Damascus a persecutor, a murderer; when he woke up in Damascus, he had a new name and a new nature. He had been violently arrested and gloriously admonished. The living Christ flashed such personal power down into the roots of Paul's nature that he began to tremble with the greenness of grace. Ah! Christ slew a pharisee and wrought an apostle in the same instant. Saul died so completely in the roadway that when Nero's headsman killed Paul, the apostle must have wondered whether Saul and Paul had ever occupied the same house of life. For this man was not anodyned into a vague mysticism, stifling smoke arising from the altars of self-communion and idolatry; he was agonized into eternal life through the "eternal redemption of Christ Jesus, who gave Himself a ransom for all." "I have been crucified with Christ," he says; "and it is no longer I that live, but Christ liveth in me: and that life which I now live in the flesh I live in faith, the faith which is in the Son of God, who loved me, and gave Himself up for me."

"But," you say, "I cannot understand this atonement for sin, this redemption from sin, as proclaimed by Paul and the New Testament." Well, there is one passage in the late Professor Denney's "The Christian Doctrine of Reconciliation" which may greatly help you—that is, if you really want to be helped in this vital matter. "It

is not historical scholarship," says Doctor Denney, "that is wanted for the understanding of Paul, and neither is it the insight of genius: it is despair. Paul did not preach for scholars, nor even for philosophers; he preached for sinners. He had no gospel except for men whose mouths were stopped, and who were standing condemned at the bar of God. They understood him, and they find him eminently intelligible still. When a man has the simplicity to say, with Doctor Chalmers, 'What would I do if God did not justify the ungodly?' he has the key to the Pauline gospel of reconciliation in his hand." Suppose, then, we forego our intellectual nibbling, our spiritual dilettanteism, our much-vaunted self-respect. These are fatal inner habits, attitudes that destroy the soul; blind guides are they leading to the hell of lost spirits; they are too proud, and, therefore, too stupid to understand the forgiveness, the cleansing, the empowerment of God in Christ. Oh, realize that you cannot save yourself, and God will move the universe, or save you! Thank God for despair! Heaven cannot help us in our pride, our cleverness, our efficiency; but Heaven can help us wondrously out of these into that sufficiency of grace which shall make us sacrificial, achieving, triumphant Christians. My friend, you had better be in a dungeon of spiritual desperation than in a palace of religious ostentation. For about midnight God may shake the foundations of your prison and let you out—a joyous evangelist of

the Everliving Goodness; and about the same midnight, when all the birds of God are singing of your deliverance, some self-satisfied Nero in his Golden House may be slowly withering, spiritually freezing—a frozen soul that even the fires of God's love fail to melt. Unto your dunghill, O man! God can make it bloom. Run for your valley of black despair; Christ will exalt it into His own white and holy hill of righteousness. It shall be made manifest that ye are an epistle of Christ, a page in the Book of Life.

Moreover, does not this unbroken continuity of Christ's grace in redeemed souls emphasize the beauty of their style, the glory of their uniqueness? Who wrote this massive book named Jonathan Edwards? He is unquestionably one of the world's great men. Producing the most celebrated theological work that has come out of America, "The Freedom of the Will," he has made, in the same volume, one of the supreme contributions to the philosophy of the world. Disagree with his thought-schemes as you may, you must own the commanding saintliness, the subduing tenderness, the burning godliness of the man. The difference between Edwards and Voltaire, for example, was not a difference of capacity, of environment, of heredity, of peculiar mental or spiritual bias. Preëminently, the difference is this: One gave the Christ of God a conscious, obedient sway over his soul, the other did not. And oh, what soul-style our knightly Phillips Brooks had! After preaching before the

Queen, an Oxford don asked why he had seemed at such perfect ease. Was it not highly disconcerting to preach before her Majesty? "Not at all," said Brooks, "I have preached before my Mother." Yes; it was Mary Ann Phillips, his Mother, who sent him love-lyrics as long as she lived in the flesh. "Keep close to your Saviour, dear Philly, and remember the sacred vows that are upon you, and you will surely prosper." But while this uncrowned queen stood in the background of Brook's life, it was the King of kings and Lord of lords who occupied the foreground. "The world, humanity," he exclaimed, "has already been redeemed by Christ. The opportunities of the divine sonship are open to every man. Live! Live greatly now." Thus do all these vibrant, tingling, unique souls enforce the truth that the Christian has a certain distinct majesty of style. And he has learned it in fellowship with Christ, who hath inscribed the heavenly secret upon the tablets of his mind. That is why he is enabled to say, with F. W. H. Myers:

"Yea, through life, death, through sorrow and through sinning,
Christ shall suffice me, for He hath sufficed.
Christ is the end, for Christ was the beginning,
Christ the beginning, for the end is Christ."

III

The third chapter in our book of transcendent literature has for its caption, "Abounding Aliveness," or, as Paul says: "Written not with ink,

but with the Spirit of the living God; not in tables of stone, but in tables that are hearts of flesh." Paul is not, of course, attempting to discredit the value of writing with ink. Were it not for the art of written signs, how could we read these imperial ideas which were flashed into Paul's mind? He is simply emphasizing the truth that life cannot be set down on paper, or tablets of stone; that life cannot be completely formulated in a philosophy or a creed; for the Spirit of the living God writes only in terms of life, writes savingly upon the souls of men. Your thoughts, your desires, your motives, your prayers, your ideals—these are the materials handled by the Holy Spirit.

Now, in this matter of aliveness it behooves us to think straight. We speak most familiarly today of "the live man." What do we mean? Do we not merely mean the man who is alert, efficient, active, energetic? We say of such a man: "He's a live wire." But just wherein is he alive? And how much of him is alive? And toward what is he alive? And for what purpose is he alive? It is when we begin to answer these heart-searching questions that our hearts shrink within us. To put it bluntly: Does not our popular phrase simply mean that this so-called live man is alive only on the lower, sensual side of his being? How much time does he devote to the Bible, to prayer, to meditation, to true worship? Why, the very questions provoke either an impatience or an apology equivalent to a sodden con-

fession of the tragic wrongness, the sheer emptiness of much of our present day living. No, my friends, to be alive does not signify brain energy, or social cleverness, or commercial supremacy, or physical strenuousness. A live wire may be all these, and still be nothing more than a live wire! In my walk across the Brooklyn Bridge this morning, I passed two men. I never saw them before; I may never see them again. One was a splendid specimen of physical manhood; the other was a stooped hunchback. Which was the really vital man? That all depends. For aught I know, that athletic-looking man may be wide open on every side of his nature. But if he is just a live wire, and nothing more; and if, on the other hand, the withered, crippled man is a disciple of Christ and walks with God, why your athlete will stumble down to "dusty death," while your lame man, cured of his lameness, will walk on through green valleys of Eternal Love. Was not Paul weak in bodily presence? Yet he had such spiritual puissance—a wrestling genius that is compounded of the stuff of eternity—that he threw the world, the flesh, the devil, and the Roman Empire to boot!

To be made alive in Christ, then, is God's only way of bringing out all the fine, rich humanness within us. For God's most excellent penmanship is not, cannot be, "in tables of stone, but in tables that are hearts of flesh." Paul probably has in mind that great passage in Jeremiah, "I will put my law in their inward parts, and write it in

their hearts," as well as the words of Ezekiel, "I will take the stony heart out of their flesh, and will give them a heart of flesh." So Paul, in insisting that God's papyrus must be hearts of flesh, is simply bringing the universe up-to-date. For the goal of God's quest, the movement of worlds and dawn of epochs, is to produce the new human, personality that will wear on when stars are worn out. And no man can be truly humanized until he is thoroughly Christianized. Just this, I take it, is the import of Drummond's memorable confession. Recalling the men who woke him up, he tells us that Ruskin taught him to use his eyes; that Emerson taught him to see with his mind; that Channing taught him to believe in God; that Robertson of Brighton taught him that God was human. Yet all of them together could not teach Drummond the art of life. Passing by all transcripts, however opulent and luminous, he sought out original sources for himself. And behold! he learned life from Christ, in Christ, through Christ, and Christ only. Borrowing the words of Henry Ward Beecher, Drummond says: "My hidden ideals of what is beautiful I have drawn from Christ. My thoughts of what is manly, and noble, and pure, have almost all of them arisen from the Lord Jesus Christ."

Would you be an author immortal? Come, then, be a collaborator with Christ in writing a Book of Life! Have you made ugly sin-blotches? He is the only One who can help you out of your

sin. God says: "You must see Christ." Have you made only scrawls when you long to write limpid sentences in deeds of love? Around your incompletion pours the oceantide of His grace. Here is this Christian nurse. In collaboration with the Master, she is writing a golden book. Called in to minister to the sick mother, she finds a godless daughter. At once she sets about winning the beautiful girl to Christ. But all in vain. Then one day some lovely flowers are sent to the mother. This wise, tactful nurse receives them. Instead of placing them before the sick mother, she puts them in an adjoining room. The daughter protests. Why should the flowers fade, without her mother enjoying their beauty and bloom? Has the nurse lost her mind? "But, my dear girl," replied the nurse, "this is just what you are doing with the Master. Some of these years you say you are going to give yourself to Him. Is it going to be just your faded, frayed, withered self? Why not give Him the bloom and beauty and fragrance of your girlhood?" Oh, men, women, children, He wants us all, and He wants the whole of us! He alone can make us books of life, living epistles—the greatest literature in the universe!

VIII

THE MINISTER'S DICTIONARY*

"How forcible are right words!"—Job vi. 25.

ONE of the most alluring books in the world is the dictionary. Not especially interesting as literature, it is astonishingly interesting as a composite history of human life. For the supreme characteristic of this book cannot be defined simply because it is indefinable. The definition says that a dictionary is "a book containing the words of a language, arranged alphabetically, with explanations of their meanings." At first blush, that statement is transparent enough; but, like so many seemingly transparent things, it does not unveil the blinding transparencies in behind it. "The words of a language!" Why, the statement starts our mental feet far along the road leading back to the fire-mist out of which our planet came! What world-pain, what man-sorrow, what woman-agony; what dreams, what hopes, what duties, what heroisms, what loves, what human tragedies, what human joys laugh and weep and shout and sing through the words of a language! Cut into the heart of the most ordinary word, and it

*Delivered at New Brunswick Theological Seminary, New Brunswick, N. J., May 20, 1915.

will bleed; and where there is blood, there is life. Rossetti says that the sonnet is a moment's monument from the soul's eternity. The dictionary is the oral monument of our racial life. And upon this glad occasion, when this noble old institution sends forth these fine young men to preach the Gospel, if it be asked what relation exists between them and the dictionary, their sufficient answer must be: "Our dictionary is life." Therefore, I wish to pronounce two or three words in the minister's dictionary. Recalling the many immortal terms in our lexicon of life, I do not even intimate that the words which I shall single out are the greatest; but they are at least vitally important.

I

An essential word in the minister's dictionary is originality. There is a ringing challenge in the word. It takes us back to the roots, the beginnings, the causes of things. Justly do we acclaim the original poet, the original artist, the orginal thinker. I wonder if we ministers are emphasizing today the highest type of originality, the kind that is bred of first-hand, original living. Every man, as Emerson suggests, is a quotation from his ancestors; but every man is also a direct utterance of the life of God. In so far as each man gives the Divine Life opportunity to utter Himself in his own human life, we see a genus of originality that is as old as man and as new as

the Maytide, as well as the supreme quality of originality. It is April-fragrant in its freshness, pulsing with the tide of life behind the remark of the old farmer, when he returned to Emerson a copy of Plato which he had borrowed. "That old chap," said he, "has some of my ide-e-s!" The saying is more than quaintly aboriginal; it breathes a mental independence generated by a tingling aliveness. Originality of phrase is great; but originality of faith is greater still. Originality in thinking commands respect; but originality in living commands reverence. Originality in reaping the harvests of scholarship is brilliant; but orginality in hearing and obeying the voice of conscience as the expression of Christian character, is awe-inspiring.

Ministers, of all men, profoundly need this style of originality. An apostle of the infinite, a custodian of the life of God, the preacher must dwell hard by the eternal fountains. First-hand reality refuses to be tied in with second-hand personality. Wearing one garment in both summer and winter, walking barefoot across the snow, Socrates said: "How many things there are that I do not need." Great souls are jealous lest the baggage of life should crush out the wonder of life. Let us read many great books; we need them, every one. And are they not the bound-up heart and mind, the distilled, unaging soulfulness that high souls have left us before taking their high journeys? But oh! let us guard, with that becoming jealousy which burns in mother-

eyes bending over the little face pressed against mother-breasts, our own dear children of the mind! They may not be as bright as other children; but they are our own blood-relations. They may not be as well-dressed as our neighbor's children; but they were born under our own soul-roof, and we cannot deny them because they wear nothing better than homespun. They may not be as beautiful as other children; but a native enchantment lights up the very features of their homeliness, just because they are bone of our bone, breath of our breath. Cruel, indeed, is the father who shuts the door of his house upon the children sprung from his own loins; not less cruel, in the larger, finer tests of cruelty, is the minister who shuts the door of his own mind upon the mental and spiritual children he himself has brought into being. "God comes to see us without bell," says the poet. Be sure that you are there to open the door, whether He rings or not.

Evidently, you are needed here in this world, else you would not have come. And it is just as evident that God wants you to be an exponent of the higher originality—to so live that what you say shall be as fresh and sweet and inartificial as the first song of the first bird in spring. Your soul cannot thrive on warmed-over faith and life any more than your body can thrive on warmed-over food. You must live in a house of great intellectual dimensions; but you must live in a house of still greater spiritual magnitudes, with

lustrous windows opening upon boundless horizons of sincerity, conviction, beauty, and truth. Preaching, said Phillips Brooks, is truth through personality. And for a minister to be mentally hospitable, intellectually courteous to all truth, does not imply that he is not the soul of white-hot Christian conviction. Indeed, his mental hospitality is all the more gracious and genuine because his whole nature is penetratingly warmed at the hearthstone of unquenchable Christian fires. Thus the minister must be, first and evermore, the large and beautiful utterance of a large and beautiful self. Strong in the strength of the immortals, he must beat back the ancient iniquities of the world even as he unprisons lofty ideals in lofty deeds. Cherish, then, those luminous moments, tremulous with angelic whisperings, when thy soul and God are met together in a kind of spiritual eternity. For the time being, at least, you may get on without clock, sun, moon, and stars; for the timeless has already lifted you above time. Then, also, is begotten that originality which is greater than thinking, greater than saying, greater than doing: you have mastered the originality which is struck off by the reality of being.

In Strindberg's "Dream Play," the little girl asks: "Father, why do the flowers grow out of dirt?" "Because," the father answers, "flowers do not feel at home in dirt, and they make haste to get up into the light in order to blossom and to die." Nor do men feel at home in the dirt of the

untrue and the unholy, however persistently they may live there. They need to be everlastingly reminded that they are to get up into the light, not to blossom and die, but to live and blossom unfadingly. And who is to tell men this but a living man, thrilling from the center to the circumference of his manhood with a living message from the living God? In the best sense, he is tremendously original who can perform this sublime task. He is the living divine functioning in the midst of the undying human; he is the voice of eternity become articulate on the plains of time; he is the call of God to men who must hear and answer God's call, or perish in betraying their own manhood. The priest of the ideal moving through the courts of the actual, does not the preacher's office demand that he shall be gloriously original? Getting ready to speak in Parliament, it is said that Chatham habitually read in Bailey's dictionary. Getting ready to live for time and eternity, many a man will read you, and you only. No other book will he have; and if he reads a first-hand, flesh-and-blood edition of Christian manhood, he will come so close to the suburbs of Heaven, that he will eventually take up his residence in the White City itself. Once, in God's good providence, an old professor, for fifty years a teacher of youth, came my way. He was smitten with mortal pain. I went to see him; I read the Word of God to him; I prayed with him, and we prayed for each other. By the breath of prayer we blew the taper of faith into a

glowing flame upon the altar of his soul. Then he was like an old oak putting forth fresh leaves. In the winter of age he was green, vernal, spring-like. Rare and tuneful thoughts, rarely expressed, came like white birds of the spirit and, lodging in the branches of his mind, warbled deathlessly. One day, before going the way of the unreturning, he said: "I am going on a long journey; I would like to leave some books in your library." And he left me many noble volumes. Many a time have I sought their inspiring companionship; many a time have they given me light upon dark problems. But in the afterward of years, I think the best gift the old professor left me was just the rare and radiant gift of himself. Somewhere, on the subtle battlefield of life, amid the dusky shadows of the ground and the bright shadows of the soul, he fought his fierce human battle. And he won; he won! Right bravely he cut his way through hosts of darkness and took his stand upon victorious fields of morning. As he lay dead among his books, an unearthly peace played about his tranquil features, as if his spirit, in passing out and on and up, had left the imprint of its tender afterglow upon that silent face. I shall ever think of him, not as a scholar, though he was a scholar; nor as a teacher, though he was a great teacher; but as one who dared to be original in eternal matters; as one who accepted his life from God as a thing apart; as one who believed that he was both like and unlike any other mortal, living or dead; as

one who sought for himself the primal springs of our humanity and drank those invigorating draughts of originality which make his memory a perpetual inspiration. And this original man, who handled for himself the innermost stuff of life, was vibrant with the higher notes of William Watson's "Sovereign Poet":—

"He sits above the clang and dust of time,
With the world's secret trembling on his lip.
He asks not converse nor companionship
In the cold starlight where thou canst not climb.

"The undelivered tidings of his breast
Suffer him not to rest.
He sees afar the innumerable throng,
And binds the scattered ages with a song.

"The glorious riddle of his rhythmic breath,
His might, his spell, we know not what they be:
We only feel, whate'er he uttereth,
This savors not of death,
This hath a relish of eternity."

II

Another word in the minister's dictionary is humanness. A man who is not healthily human must fail of being the largest and most effective exposition of the divine. Roughly, ministers may be divided into two classes. The first may be described as the anti-human type. If he ever smiled, the most observant inhabitant remembers it not. If he ever wept, nobody can speak with authority. If he ever saw the morning break its heart of gold upon the green, sun-colored hills,

nobody knows it. If he ever felt a dart from Cupid's bow strike a vital spot, nobody imagines it. If he ever thinks of the social problems of the community, nobody is informed of it. If the pathos and tragedy of the human lot has ever stirred his soul, nobody is aware of it. For all practical purposes, he is serenely non-human. He goes his solitary, uninviting way, and, quite naturally, other people go theirs. Fortunately, there is a more representative and healthy class of ministers. It is the opulently, glowingly human minister. He is an asset to the community, to the city, to the nation. A farmer said of a nineteenth century President: "We thought he was something of a man when we had him in our state; but come to spread him out over the whole nation, he does average dreadful thin!" The wholesomely human minister is ever a man, never evaporatingly thin; he spreads out over his large human world with no hint of diminution. He knows the joy and sorrow, the weakness and strength, the hope and despair, the goodness and badness of men and women. Nothing that is properly human can be contemptuously foreign to him. A lad had moved his toy brush and paints into the dining room. He was engaged sketching a chicken, while I was engaged eating one, or parts thereof. "What is the difference," I asked, "between your chicken and mine?" He answered promptly: "One is a picture, the other is the real thing." Is it not the minister's irresistible tug of hearty human reality that draws

men? Pascal said: "We are delighted when we expect to see an author and find a man." Are not average human folk delighted, also, when they expect to see a mere minister and find instead a man—a big, simple, true, strong, Christ-inspired man, the noblest work of God? A workingman once wrote to Phillips Brooks: "To me you reveal God as no other man does. What I mean by that is, I can't think of you for ten consecutive minutes without forgetting all about you and thinking of God instead; and when I think of God, and wonder how He will seem to me, it always comes round to trying to conceive of you enlarged infinitely in every way." Blessed is that compelling, dedicated human-heartedness, magnetic with moral sincerity, which spontaneously suggests the divine! Heaven and earth should intersect in the preacher's manhood; and, surely, a mellow humanness is fertile soil for the seeds of a genuine heavenliness. Professor Barbour contends that the virtues of all philosophic systems are taken up into the heart of Christian ideas and made to realize themselves through Christianity. Whether the conclusion be true or not, the fundamental appeal of the Christian minister lies in the fact that he proclaims a message which alone brings self-realization to man. God does not intend that men shall be divorced from the human. Man is neither an improved brute nor a potential angel; he is always, and in all worlds, the human. Inasmuch as God has honored our humanity by manifesting the divine

through the human, the minister should yearn to make his own inner self the correct human pronunciation of the divine. And to do this, he must be superbly, grandly human—a manly human tone momentarily spoken anew through the grace of the invisible living, reigning Son of Man and Son of God. I do not need to add that the task is hard; that would be but to emphasize the task's heroic challenge and to suggest its imperial worth. But let us attempt it in the spirit of the words of Thomas Davidson, that "wandering scholar" and friend of the late William James. "If a thousand plans fail," he said, "be not disheartened. As long as your purpose is right, you have not failed." And that purpose, bravely sustained by a living man among living men, is constantly chanting a true canticle of human sympathy and fellowship.

"Is the way hard and thorny, oh, my brother?
  Do tempests beat, and adverse wild winds blow?
And are you spent and broken at each nightfall,
  Yet with each morn you rise and onward go?
Brother, I know, I know—
I, too, have journeyed so.

"Is your heart mad with longing, oh, my sister?
  Are all great passions in your breast aglow?
Does the white wonder of your own soul blind you,
  And are you torn with rapture and with woe?
Sister, I know, I know!
I, too, have suffered so.

"Is the road filled with snare and quicksand, pilgrim?
  Do pitfalls lie where roses seem to grow?

And have you sometimes stumbled in the darkness,
  And are you bruised and scarred by many a blow?
Pilgrim, I know, I know!
I, too, have stumbled so.

"Do you send out rebellious cry and question,
  As mocking hours pass silently and slow?
Does your insistent "wherefore" bring no answer,
  While stars wax pale with watching, and droop low?
I, too, have questioned so,
But now *I know, I know!*
To toil, to strive, to err, to cry, to grow,
To love through all—this is the way to *know.*"

III

The supreme word in the minister's dictionary is affirmation. He believes something with all his soul and he utters it with the emphasis of his entire being. His message is not an aimless negation drifting about in the nebulous vistas of uncharted space. He is authentic with a definite message for the definite needs of somewhat indefinite men living in a most indefinite time. Of all eras, our own is at once distinguished and hopeful in this: No uncertain or apologetic voice carries far or lasts long. Obsessed as we are by religious quacks, wearing coats of so many colors that the wearers would constitute an ideal Midway Plaisance in a World's Fair of Isms, yet the fact that their devotees are taken up with some new quack on the morrow, is of more than passing significance. Does it not indicate that, in spite of the depravity and degeneracy of our sodden human life, there is that within the souls of

men which refuses to be cheated of its original birthright? Lord Lister's lectures and clinics were usually packed. Yet sometimes students of other surgeons opposed Lister and his enthusiastic followers. But when such students became ill and an operation was necessary, they invariably sent for Lister and not the other surgeons. And however men may play the fool spiritually, there is that within their own nature which cries out for the Great Physician, for the living God, and no other. This constitutes the peril and opportunity of the ministry of Christendom today —tragically perilous if it goes forth with timid equivocations, splendidly glorious if it marches with the challenge of Christian affirmations. The heart of the world is very sore—broken, torn up by the roots, bleeding to the depths. God's priest must not be quizzical while a planet is reeling. Men are growing justly impatient of clerical interrogation points; they at least respect the man who exclaims: "One thing I know, that, whereas I was blind, now I see."

New times unquestionably demand new men; new occasions teach new duties; but the new men for the new times and the new occasions and the new duties are eternal men, and not temporal vagrants. Like their fathers, they may be pilgrims, but they are not outcasts; not theologic Arabs, who pitch their tent for the night and steal away with the morning; not religious gypsies, who face life's untraveled ways with nothing more than an acute case of spiritual wander-

lust. There is unmistakable pathos in going toward great human changes, but there is unutterable glory in taking along with us that which does not change. Amidst all change, the Christian minister is a citizen of the changeless. Heartily believing that God fulfills Himself in many ways, he knows that there is One Way into which all lesser ways lead as surely as gravity leads each individual raindrop into the homing bosom of the great sea. Therefore, he affirms that God is—holy, wise, just, loving, perfectly good; he affirms that God hath spoken once and forever in the birth, life, teaching, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ, our Lord; he affirms that the God of the past is the God of the present in the guiding, cleansing, teaching power of the Holy Spirit; he affirms that God, for Christ's sake, does forgive guilty human sin and redeems from its blighting power; he affirms that the Kingdom of God has come, is coming, and will continue to come until the kingdoms of this world have become the kingdoms of our Lord and His Christ; he affirms that right alone makes might and that brute force is foredoomed to failure; he affirms that righteousness alone exalts a nation as goodness alone measures the worth of the individual; he affirms that God created men to be brothers, and implanted the necessity of brotherhood so deeply in all men that the sword of international fratricide cannot destroy it; he affirms that man is a deathless spirit—that he hears, even now, the nightingale of immortality singing through the

dark of these human years, and that by and by he shall hear the nightingale's song taken up by the lips of the hundred and forty and four thousand in the Morning Land of Life. These are a few of the affirmations of the Christian minister of today and tomorrow; and he makes them in the quiet assurance of one who says:

"I have a smile my friends to greet,
Hearty and pleasant for all I meet,
Hidden from none;
But I have a smile they do not know,
Lit by a deeper, tenderer glow,
And I keep it bright in my heart below
Only for One.

"I have a song for every ear,
Leaving an echo to soothe and cheer
When it is done;
But I have a music of truer beat,
Not to be poured at the great world's feet,
Richer and softer and far more sweet,
Only for One.

"I have a love for all who care
Ought for its warmth to calm or share,
Free as the sun;
But I have a love I do not hint,
Gold that is stamped with my own soul's print,
A wealth of love, both mine and mint,
Only for ONE."

IX

THE MOST WONDERFUL GARDEN IN THE WORLD*

"And by reason of the exceeding greatness of the revelations, that I should not be exalted overmuch, there was given to me a thorn in the flesh, a messenger of Satan to buffet me, that I should not be exalted overmuch."—II Cor. xi. 7.

GREAT souls furnish at once telescopic and microscopic vision of God. On the one hand, they help us to see the God Who is far off, omnipotent, majestic, clothing Himself in the garments of Time and Eternity; on the other hand, they reveal the God Who is intimately near, tenderly strong, patiently wise, and lovingly just. Both viewpoints are essential because, after using all of our aids unto a vision of Him, men always come back from the glowing mount with the confession: "Lo! these are only parts of His ways." One of the high moments of life, therefore, is to catch a great soul in the act of conceiving one of his deepest insights into the nature of God. Do we not find Paul at just such an angle of being here? Usually, when we hear him speak of his thorn in the flesh, we instantly ask: "Well, what was it anyway?" Then we

*Preached in the Marble Collegiate Church, New York, March 2, 1919.

turn to the debate of the scholars, age-long and sapiently academic. We remind ourselves that Lightfoot said Paul's thorn in the flesh was epilepsy, that Farrar said it was acute ophthalmia, that Ramsey said it was malarial fever. If this is not sure proof that nobody knows what Paul's thorn in the flesh was, then I am no judge of the laws of evidence! What we are so prone to forget, however, is the thing that Paul seems so insistent upon our remembering; and that is, the reason why he had his thorn in the flesh. "And by reason of the exceeding greatness of the revelations, that I should not be exalted overmuch, there was given to me a thorn in the flesh, a messenger of Satan to buffet me, that I should not be exalted overmuch." *"That I should not be exalted overmuch"*—that is Paul's own reason for his possessing the thorn, make of it what we will. Not often does Paul repeat himself twice over, and that almost to the point of violent iteration, in a single sentence; but he does it here, and quite evidently for the purpose of impressing upon the Corinthian Christians the reason why he limped, and finally flew, across the world, carrying a dripping thorn in his fleshly vitals.

Now the apostle's revelation of his experience discloses itself to me as a kind of wonderful garden—the most wonderful garden in the world—a garden blowing with the white of Eden and running with the red of Gethsemane—the Garden of the Blooming Thorn. There are two plots

in it—the divine and the human—and I want us to glimpse a little into each plot.

I

There are two roses growing in God's plot of this wonderful garden. There is, first, the rose of divine grace: "And He hath said unto me, My grace is sufficient for thee." It is God's answer to a questioning, sorely wounded man. Paul's thorn in the flesh had wrought one of those invisible wounds, unseen of men; yet it bled on in the night before the observant eyes of God, as well as before the eyes of Paul's own soul. Oh, it was a battle royal waged there in the silences! Were the curtain lifted, I think we should stand in awe, and our only speech would be the throbbing of astonished hearts. There was no noise, no explosion, but just the steady, stubborn wrestle of a man with destiny. Again and again had his mysterious antagonist hurled him into the dust; again and again had his cry gone up out of the night for help, for reënforcements to rescue him from the clutch of his desperate enemy. "Concerning this thing," says Paul, "I besought the Lord thrice, that it might depart from me." What a confession! "Concerning this thing." What thing? God alone knows—and Paul. Yet do we know "this thing"—this strange, dark, intangible thing—whatever it was, is deeply rooted in the soil of evil, a blasted tree bearing withered leaves. "I besought the Lord thrice." Is not that

Gethsemane over again? Going forward a little, Paul also staggers, and falls, and prays thrice that he might not longer drink his bitter cup. "That it might depart from me." Ah, how old it all is, and how startlingly new! "Take away evil, sin, wrong, injustice, O Lord. Take them all away; let them depart from me." This prayer, I venture, has been prayed by human beings as many times as there are stars in the heavens, as there are waves in the sea, as there are buds in the spring. And yet it is the one prayer that God never answers—at least never in the form in which it is usually prayed.

And why? Because He has a better answer—an answer becoming to God, an answer meeting the demands of Paul's soul, of your soul, of my soul, of every human soul. It is this: "My grace is sufficient for thee." Just as if God had said: "O Paul, you ask Me to take away your thorn, but I cannot take it away. I am the Lord God, the most profoundly obligated Being in all the universe. I have created worlds without number, but worlds cannot satisfy My longing for souls, for children—morally obedient children made in My image. I have set you here in this vast workshop of matter to fashion Me a fine instrument for the realization of My purposes. Your toils and struggles are only shavings thrown off in the process of perfecting the Harp of the Soul. No; I cannot remove your thorn in the flesh; I am God—the God of Jesus Christ; I must be true to Myself, and faithful unto you,

My child. Therefore, while I cannot remove your thorn, Paul, I can and will do a far more wonderful and gracious thing: I will make it bloom; I will cause even your thorn to put forth a rose—the rose of grace. My grace is sufficient for thee."

"My grace!" And what is that? Grace is omnipotence acting at its highest, divinest, tenderest. Grace is the Heart of the Infinite sending out its fertilizing tides of love to the weakly withering human and clothing it with immortal verdure. Grace says: "Lift up your eyes to the heavens, and look upon the earth beneath; for the heavens shall vanish away like smoke, and the earth shall wax old like a garment; and they that dwell therein shall die in like manner: but My salvation shall be for ever, and My righteousness shall not be abolished." That is grace! When the universe has become vanishing smoke and the earth a worn-out garment holding all the dead within its crumpled folds, grace is the salvation, the righteousness of God, that shall endure as long as God has any being.

Little wonder, therefore, that this grace is alone sufficient for the manifold needs of men. Where, but in these Eternal Heights, may we hope to find our sufficiency? In the professional cults which guarantee to refurbish burnt-out souls with sugar-coated pills rolled by quacks—these modern ladies and gentlemen crying aloud the cast-off wares of Indian fakirs in the Christless deserts of American cities? Nay! Unclean

in themselves and pestilentially unholy, because they know no cure for sin and uncleanness, they make their innocent dupes threefold more the children of hell, even while they stuff their own pockets with ill-gotten gain. Is our sufficiency to be had in an indomitable will to love, to power, to conquer? If these four crimson years have proven one thing, it is this: Majestic as human will is, it is either too weak or too wicked to discharge its moral obligations unaided by the spiritual forces residing in the Cross. Shall we find our legislative and educational programs, all of our sorely needed reconstructive agencies, sufficient? In his noble essay on "Sweetness and Light," one of the sanest, finest pleas for culture in the language, Matthew Arnold argues that culture and religion are the great historic efforts after perfection. But, I ask, do they stand upon the same footing? Do culture, as he defines it, "which is the study of perfection," and religion occupy the same planes of reality? I think not. Arnold says culture is the pursuit of an ideal which expands human nature. But the heart of the Christian religion, as I understand it, is the indwelling of a Person, first redeeming and then expanding human nature to its utmost capacities. Thus do all of our deadly clever modern efforts to escape from the salvation of God in Christ only plunge us deeper and deeper into the abyss of sinful despair.

But if we are truly honest with ourselves in these terrible, God-searching days, we shall come

to close grips with a terribly and gloriously honest God. We shall be continually asking: "What is my thorn in the flesh? Is it lust? Is it jealousy? Is it avarice? Is it hypocrisy? Is it an ungracious tongue? Is it lack of a social conscience?" Well, my friends, no matter what it is, the Lord Christ is still saying: "My grace is sufficient for thee." Do not, I beg you, ignore the tense of this roseal promise: it is neither past nor future, but present. "My grace is"—not was, nor will be! Be of good courage, therefore, even though you walk an unheavened way. Give heed to Dante's golden exhortation:

> "To your rash judgments give ye not the reins
> With too much eagerness, like him who ere
> The corn be ripe, is fain to count the grains.
> For I have seen the briar through the winter snows
> Look sharp and stiff—yet on a future day
> High on its summit bear the tender rose."

Walking along the enchanting paths of this unique garden, still another rose may be found in God's plot. It is the rose of divine perfection: "For my power is made perfect in weakness." Verily, here is something altogether new in the realms of power. Where, but in the Soul of God as disclosed in Christ, does power perfect itself through weakness? Look into the cellars of the physical world, and you will find things red enough in tooth and claw. You will witness a cosmic struggle between the weak and the strong. Instead of the strong perfecting itself through the weak, the strong asserts itself in the destruc-

tion of the weak. Yonder rolls the sea. Man builds his home upon the shore. What do the strong tides care for the little cottage that enshrines love, parenthood, and childhood? Just as little, and just as much, as those tides care for the bursting foam upon its heaving billows. Do the tornado and the volcano perfect themselves in weakness? Rather do they invite the weak to their orgy of destruction and roar with fiendish laughter while they burn the frail with unquenchable fury. Coming into the organic realm, and making due allowance for all the altruistic strains to be found therein, there is the same red tale of consuming horror. The lion eats the tiger, the tiger the panther, the panther the dog, the dog the sheep. "Tone it down as you will," says J. Arthur Thomson, "the fact remains that Darwinism regards animals as going upstairs, in a struggle for individual ends, often on the corpses of their fellows, often by a blood-and-iron competition, often by a strange mixture of blood and cunning, in which each looks out for himself and extinction besets the hindmost." In other words, Nature spreads her bountiful table, impartially invites the strong and the weak to come, and the strong feast upon the weak, and finally upon each other. And the fact is even more repulsively true of unredeemed human nature. Does the strong Hun perfect his strength through the weak Belgian? No: he shells, he hacks, he rapes, he burns, he poisons, he crucifies. He makes himself a stench in the nostrils of the Al-

mighty and a byword unto all generations. Were Alfred Russel Wallace living today, I wonder if the inhumanities that have stalked the planet, let loose from Teutonic lairs and dungeons, would not compel the scientist to either rewrite or revise his chapter entitled "Is Nature Cruel?"

Yet, and in the teeth of it all, here is a voice declaring a new and unearthly kind of strength operative among spiritual intelligences. "My power is made perfect in weakness." Nobody but God, it seems to me, would dare say a thing like that to man. For men must not make concessions to innumerable types of weakness with which they are fatally familiar. Too easily do we yield to softness, to sham tenderness. Most of us need to be stern with ourselves, however magnanimously we may feel disposed toward our fellows. At the same time, the core, the heart, the soul, the mind of things is this: God is love. He loves the unlovely; He yearns over the strayed, the sinful, the ignorant, the fallen. These are the emotions of the Godhead; they are what they are because His nature is what it is; and the universe may change to dust and ashes, but God the Almighty, the Everlasting Father, cannot change. This is why the blessed God is never so happy as when one of His weak human children allows Him to link that weakness up to His redeeming strength. For the perfection of God's power, in the very nature of things, flowers forth in its moral and spiritual passion to sacrifice, to serve, to save. And do we not see this truth concretely

expressed in all gracious human activities? What is the secret of a little child's strength? Why, its weakness—unquestionably. Three children—five, seven, and nine years of age—recently arrived in my boyhood home from the State of Washington. Their parents grew up in Eastern Kentucky, married, went West, built a home, and in due season these three children were born. During the influenza scourge, both parents died. The problem of those Washington neighbors was to get the three orphans back to their grandparents in Kentucky. And love—human love, the urge of God in human hearts—was grandly equal to the task. Tickets were bought for the children; tags containing the name of their destination were tied to them; Kenneth, Keith, and Dimple were placed upon an eastbound train. Did they get lost upon that long journey? Did they find time to be lonely or lonesome? Oh, no! Kind hearts, which are more than crowns of gold, stood about those orphans like sentinels guarding a weary, sleeping king. Some of the travelers, to be sure, were slightly nonplused because the little pilgrims refused to eat a mouthful without first saying grace at the dining car tables; but even the rankest infidel has no reply to the God who dwells in the trustfulness and simplicity of a child's heart. He may quarrel with churches, preachers, and theologians until the crack of doom; but when a child bows its head in prayer, the universe puts forth new blooms of beauty, and even the atheist is made to stand in

awe and sin not with his tongue. Yes; those three children at last set their homing feet upon the welcome hearthstone of their grandparents. Starting with three dollars, Love multiplied their capital a dozenfold, and they arrived with thirty-six of Uncle Sam's good dollars inside their pockets. It was a journey of triumph across the continent. And why? Ah, you know why! Why are the daisy-sprinkled meadows white with beauty? Why does summer's joyousness cry aloud through the robin's "clean ecstasy"? Why, as William Vaughan Moody asked, "the old mystic joys and starry griefs" when spring nights come on? Why are the hands of father strong, and the hands of mother tender, and the hands of youth valiant, and the hands of maidenhood gentle? Why are orchards luscious, and October cornfields sad, and April gardens greenly fair, and star-strewn spaces awe-inspiring? Why does music melt us, and eloquence move us, and prayer exalt us, and worship sublime us? Well, then, that is why, when three little homeless children start forth upon a journey of hundreds of miles, men and women watch over them with a special passion of lovingkindness. And so, is not your human answer to all these other old eternal questions a part, a tone, an accent, at least, of God's great answer to man's deathless spirit: "My power is made perfect in weakness"? As strong men and women seize upon that frail harp named a little child to play out the perfect melody of their strength, so the all-glorious God seizes

upon His maturer children of dust and destiny to show forth the measureless reaches of His perfection through the salvation that is in Christ Jesus, that He might bring many sons to honor and glory here and to peace and dominion in His many abiding places of Love and Light in the worlds beyond.

II

There is also a human plot in this wondrous garden. Therein are quiet, strangely beautiful, perfumed walks, and the roses are very fair. Look at this full-blown rose of Christian submission. Then confess that only the Heavenly Florist can produce so gorgeous a specimen. For this thorn-thrust man, remember, is now talking back to God, to men, to his own soul, after God has pushed the gates of Paradise ajar and allowed Paul to look within. What does he say? How does his nature react toward such revelations as it is not lawful for a man to utter? "Most gladly therefore will I rather glory in my weaknesses," he says, "that the power of Christ may rest upon me."

There are two kinds of submission. There is a sullen, fatalistic submission, devoid of morality or conscience. It wears a scowling countenance; it speaks through a growling voice. "Submission? Certainly! Why not? What's the use of refusing to submit?" Is it not the outburst of a soul soured by too large quaffs of old Omar's vinegar? And, let us be honest, is it not the

mood that weighs most heavily upon the modern man? And where did the mood have its birth? It may have been back, far back, in the long-gone ages. But no matter; it is here; it is a fact. Moreover, has not the ugliness of the mood grown with man's growing body? Bergson is right, lined up on the side of truth and Christ, when he forecasts the judgment of the future philosopher concerning our era. "He will say that the idea peculiar to the nineteenth century of employing science in the satisfaction of our material wants, had given a wholly unforeseen extension to the mechanical arts, and had equipped man in less than fifty years with more tools than he had made during the thousands of years he had lived on the earth. Each new machine being for man a new organ—an artificial organ—his body became suddenly and prodigiously increased in size, without his soul being able at the same time to dilate to the dimensions of his new body." Aye, there's the rub, the wrinkle upon the modern soul as upon the ancient soul, the disease that preys upon the spiritual vitals of humanity—ah, that sinful old soul functioning in a new and scientifically gigantic body threatens to destroy civilization itself! And believe me, my friends, there is no hope for us until we seriously undertake a planetary campaign for new men to match our new physical bodies. God is burning this truth into the soul of the nations, and the nations must either accept it, and live by it, or perish by their own self-destruction. Let us use all the healing,

humanitarian, reconstructive forces we can marshal; let us have a real league of international fellowship; let us insist upon increasing and deepening social coöperations—in the church, in the state, in education, in commerce, in every walk of life. But let us be not deceived. No physical, social, commercial, and cultural Utopia can be substituted for, or meet the demands of, individually recreated, regenerated human beings. It is possible to make your international social scheme as smooth as glass, even while it remains as deadly as death. And my own conviction is that neither God, nor ultimately human beings themselves, will endure anything short of souls new-born, either in this or any other world. For any other cure for sinfully perverted men, save that which comes through Christ, begets an ingrown sullenness, a leaden-toned fatalism that curses God and life, even though it cannot die.

Over against this involuntary submission, consider Paul's conscious, eager, spontaneous yielding to the Will that enclasps him. "Most gladly therefore will I rather glory in my weaknesses." It is the upbursting of a divine gladness from the deep wells of a transfigured nature. Paul is like a glorious swimmer breasting the billows of being. He does not wait for the tides to sweep in and toss him, bruised and broken, upon the rocks. He hurries to meet them; he leaps into the sea's hospitable embrace; he works with it rather than against it; thus the deep claims him for its

friend, not its victim. Similarly, the only way to escape God, and those immutable moral laws which are the habits of God's being, is to leap toward His redemptive Bosom, and the Bosom that feeds the universe cannot fail to nourish His trusting child. For what is the goal, the result of Paul's glorying in his weaknesses? What, pray, is the secret of this exultant man? Is it not just this—"that the power of Christ may rest upon me"? Did Saul, the death-dealing pharisee, sense any such power amid the worlds? If he did, he has certainly failed to report it. His own closed mind, of which he was haughtily proud, had simply closed the higher regions of the spiritual universe to him. Try as he might, employing all the moral and mental instruments his masterful nature was able to command, he could not pry, though ever so slightly, the mystic door opening into the inner sanctuary. But lo! as he breathes forth slaughter and death among his fellows, the Unseen Opener of the Gate comes out, blinds him, tames him, extracts the ferocity from his soul, and leads him into unfading gardens of grace watered from the River of Life. A changed man means a changed universe. Otherwise, the universe may go on changing forever, but until the grace of God changes the man himself, while the man may see some loveliness, he is bound to see much terror as he walks uncertain ways toward a night of deepening gloom.

The other rose blooming in our human plot is the rose of Christian victory. Anticipated al-

ready, yet this rose has a color and scent that challenge a passing glance. "Wherefore I take pleasure in weaknesses, in injuries, in necessities, in persecutions, in distresses, for Christ's sake." Surely, there is just one color here, and one only—the Christ-color. There is nothing to surpass it. Flowers in the Hanging Gardens of Heaven may be larger, but this is their hue—make no mistake about it. Or, to change the metaphor, this is the speech of a soul that can sound the deeps of life and find them sweet, that can measure the lengths of life and declare them good, that can explore the breadths of life and affirm them fair, that can climb the heights of life and proclaim them rich. Everything, says Paul, is worth while for Christ's sake. It is just the Christ-color that God smites through the Christian soul, just one of those flashes struck from God into man's budding midnight. Yet the color does not excel the perfume of this rose pinned by the fingers of grace upon Paul's soul. "For when I am weak, then am I strong." How can you explain such thoughts as these? You cannot explain them. Only life, not words, can interpret them. They are golden contradictions, heavenly paradoxes that yield their richness, strength, and sweetness to lives plunged into the vats of God—lives longing to be washed clean of all their littleness, lives determined to shed all dross even as the pure gold of Christ-like character shines more and more through vessels of clay, waiting in hope for the daydawn when they

shall be perfected golden bowls meet for the Temple of the New Universe, built by God through Jesus Christ, King of kings and Lord of lords, to Whom be glory, dominion, majesty, and power forever and ever, world without end.

X

THE BLESSED HUNGRY

"Blessed are they that hunger and thirst after righteousness: for they shall be filled."—St. Matt. v. 6.

MANY seem to think the Sermon on the Mount lacks unity. They say, also, that the Beatitudes are without organic relation, that they are so many verbal gems strung together, devoid of order or kinship. As a matter of fact, these are false statements resulting from inaccurate thinking. Christian students are profoundly impressed by the vital connections throughout the Sermon. According to Professor Carr, the words of this New Sinai fall into three great divisions. First, the Subjects of the Kingdom—their character, privileges, and responsibility; second, the Kingdom in relation to the Law and to Pharisaic rules; third, the Characteristics of the Kingdom—the judgment of others, the Father's love for the Children of the Kingdom, the narrow entrance therein, the danger of false guides to the narrow entrance, and the test of the true, a description of the true subjects of the Kingdom, as distinguished from the false. The Beatitudes naturally come under the division of the Subjects of the Kingdom. And these, too, follow each other in perfect order. Spiritual poverty is the

first; sadness for sin is the second; meekness—submission to the will of God—is the third; soul-hunger for righteousness is the fourth; these are followed by the three virtues of the Christian life, rising, in an ascending scale—mercy, purity, peace-making. Our study for this morning is based upon the Fourth—the benediction which our Lord pronounces upon the Blessed Hungry.

I

"Blessed are they that hunger and thirst." This is the law of all living things. Indeed, hunger may be defined as the condition of life. A thousand invisible mouths are wrought into the body of a tree. Limbs and roots forage in the surrounding earth and atmosphere to satisfy the tree's hunger-bitten nature. That lithe, majestic wind-harp of hill and meadow owes its litheness, majesty, and greenness to the burning hungers and thirsts that rage in every atom of its being. The tiny animal, also, thrust into a new environment with eyes fast shut—how long will it remain upon the earth? Consult its appetite, not the calendar; appetite will tell you the story of its growth and maturity. The good health of every animal is absolutely dependent upon a good appetite. Other laws of the pack may be modified in various ways; the law of hunger changes not. Coming up higher still into the realm of living things, we see the baby human. When God wished to manifest, in the fields of time and space, the most won-

derful thing in eternity, the thought of a human baby flashed into His mind. "I will take a spark of My own being," said the Lord God, "a spark of My very Self, enswathe it in garments of flesh, endow it with creative powers, trouble it with the ache of deathlessness, and send it forth into the wilds of time and sense." A thrill must have stirred the higher intelligences when the idea of a human baby, a mystic cargo of immortality set afloat upon the Nile of destiny, was conceived by God! But how long will this creature of dust and deity remain under a roof of skull and bone? Long enough to grow a good appetite—no longer. Blessed is the tree, the animal, the human that knows the pang of physical hunger and thirst! It is a token of health.

Think, moreover, of the intellectual phase of the law of hunger. Mental hunger is the preventive of mental decay. If the mind feeds upon nothing, it is bound to become like that which it assimilates; and for mind to descend lower and lower to the point of invisibility, is to sentence mind to a career for which it was never designed. What bleaker tragedy than that of the closed mind? God has placed us in a world in which there is some new fact or truth to make an intellectual feast for each day. And yet I have heard men boastfully say: "I haven't changed my opinion in twenty-five years!" Such an expression is easily explained. It simply means that they haven't had an opinion worth changing in twenty-five years! People of real opinions, or,

better still, of vital convictions, are always changing them—changing them into something deeper, truer, finer, more Christlike. That is a sign of wholesome intellectual growth, which is, of course, an essential part of integral moral and spiritual symmetry. Meeting a friend in Fulton street, I noticed that he had bulging pockets. There was no tangible reason for thinking that he carried much silver or gold, and less still for concluding that he was unduly loaded with concealed deadly weapons. Goaded by curiosity, I began an investigation. What do you think I found? In one pocket there was a work on philosophy, in another a volume on natural science, in a third a book of poems, and in a fourth a copy of the New Testament and Psalms. "I invariably find them good traveling companions," he explained. "In the trolley cars, subways, and other places I manage to come at them. They are soothing and stimulating." Somehow this modern man, building his sanctuary right in the center of the city's roar and strife, recalls that "Country Laborer," of whom Faber has sung:

> "He walked with painful stoop
> As if life had made him droop,
> And care had fastened fetters round his feet;
> He saw no bright blue sky
> Except what met his eye,
> Reflected from the rainpools in the street."

But, for all that, was he only a vagabond wandering between two worlds? Nay, verily! For—

"Always his downcast eye
Was laughing silently,
As if he found some jubilee in thinking;
For his one thought was God,
In that one thought he abode,
For ever in that thought more deeply sinking."

I have another friend who read the complete works of Shakespeare one winter, while journeying on the trolley cars between his Brooklyn home and his New York office. Ah, blessed indeed is the hungry and thirsty mind! It invades the beckoning kingdoms of intellect and finds strong and delicious meat in all. Why should we be overmuch satisfied with buffoons and penny-a-liners, when the imperial thinkers are striving to attract our attention, earnestly inviting us to journey with them through the green pastures of immortal mind? If we are content with the intellectually second best, the ordinary, or the vulgar, the reason is self-evident: Our sense of mental hunger has been blunted or perverted.

II

Next to the general law of hunger, the Master places a definite craving for the highest. "Blessed are they that hunger and thirst after righteousness." This, then, is the path by which the soul attains its coronation. "But," says a man, "I have no appetite for any such thing; so the Master's words do not include me." It is alas! too true. They do not include him in the

sense that they hold the positive enrichment of his entire nature; but they certainly include him in the sense that, in the nature of things, they pronounce his spiritual doom. Here is this man in California. He writes that the country is beautiful, the climate charming, the hotel palatial, the fare sumptuous. "But ah! me," he wails, "I have no appetite." A few weeks later his body comes home in a coffin. The man is physically dead, not for lack of food, but for lack of hunger. Is it not spiritually true of the life that confesses its want of hunger and thirst after righteousness? The person who has no love for pictures is dead to painting; so far as he is concerned, God might as well never have spoken Angelo and Rembrandt into being. He does not neighbor them in the lands of beauty where they reside. We pity the nature dead to music, to architecture, to eloquence. Why should we not put on sackcloth and sit in ashes for the soul dead to God? Suppose that a man fulfills every standard of citizenship and culture. He is a fine father, an exemplary husband, a royal friend. "But," he says, "I not only do not hunger and thirst after righteousness; I do not even believe in a personal God or in personal immortality." Across the street from this excellent citizen, let us assume, lives another man—course, vulgar, an enemy to all that is virtuous and good. He, too, is a stout disbeliever in a personal God and in personal immortality. Now, as to the two men, no sane person would have much difficulty in

choosing between them. We would unhesitatingly take our stand with the virtuous man, holding, with Mr. Huxley, that integrity and morality are decidedly worth while, even apart from the consideration of a life after death. But, in the long view, which is the more tragical of the two lives? Admittedly, the bad man is repulsive, not only in character but in practice; not so the splendid citizen, husband, and father. Yet he, too, built his house upon the edge of the grave. Like his vile neighbor, this good man said: "There is no God, no immortality." Which, I repeat, is the more tragical of the two lives? Is it not that of the good one, if there be no God, no life beyond these troubled years? Certainly there is no such intellectual and moral wrench in concluding that the bad life, to put it on the lowest plane, should pause at the grave, as there is in thinking that this good life, capable of immeasurable growth in fineness and strength of character, meets with the same fate. Tennyson, in some of the noblest lines in English literature, has set the two conceptions over against each other in unforgettable words:

"Glory of warrior, glory of orator, glory of song,
Paid with a voice flying by to be lost on an endless sea—
Glory of Virtue, to fight, to struggle, to right the wrong—
Nay, but she aim'd not at glory, no lover of glory she;
Give her the glory of going on, and still to be.

"The wages of sin is death: if the wages of Virtue be dust,
Would she have heart to endure for the life of the worm
and the fly?

She desires no isles of the blest, no quiet seats of the just,
To rest in a golden grove, or to bask in a summer sky;
Give her the wages of going on, and not to die."

Our second consideration, in the Master's thought of life's supreme hunger, is this: In the economy of the universe, God has made no provision for the permanent peace, poise, and satisfaction of the soul through the lower and secondary things of life. He has slipped one end of the golden string of godliness into the hand of man, and if man winds that string into a ball, it will lead him into the New Jerusalem of righteousness and peace. Otherwise, man is a cheat, a blunder, an Ishmael wandering in deserts of unlit gloom. The history of nations and individuals is full of illustrations of this truth. As to nations, it is not necessary to call upon dead empires to bear witness to the law which they violated, and by which, in turn, they were destroyed. If ever a nation has been desperately bent upon satisfying what it calls its national consciousness by secondary things, is not Germany that nation? What political economy, what organization, what mechanical skill, what scholarship, what social schemes have been produced by Germany! And lo! what perfidy, what vileness, what brutality, what infamy, what unspeakable atrocities this same soulless Germany is capable of! It was Goethe who said: "A few centuries may have to run their course before it can be said of the German people, 'It is a long time since they were barbarians.'" "Made in Germany" is

now synonymous with "Made in Hades." And why has the world been compelled to unsheathe its sword for the arrest of this hydra-headed military monster? Because Germany wanted "a place in the sun"? No; Germany did not want "a place in the sun"; she wanted the *only* "place in the sun." "World Empire or Downfall!" was her slogan before she wantonly declared war upon the world. In a word, Germany has been for forty years busily engaged in bartering, selling her soul for the lesser and secondary things of national life.

As of the nation, so of the individual—the all-wise God has made no provision for meeting the demands of a human being through secondary means. This is at once the justification and teaching of the greater religions of the race; but it is the heart and soul of the Christian religion. "What shall a man be profited, if he shall gain the whole world, and forfeit his life? or what shall a man give in exchange for his life?" Consider, therefore, some of the worthful things of the world in relation to the soul's satisfaction. For example, there is property, that hard bone over which the dogs of contention are fighting today as never in the history of man. Nobody questions the healthy satisfaction arising from the sense of legitimate possession. But nobody questions, either, the utter inadequacy of ownership, in the little or in the large, to offer peace to the human spirit. "Millionaires rarely laugh"—that is the dictum of one of them. Higher than

property values are the values of art. The artist in wood or brass or stone or color or speech or melody is a kind of creator. Taking the materials at hand, he combines them into the statue, the temple, the sermon, the oratorio. But art, after all, is just a means of conveying the bread of beauty to the soul. When art fails of this high end, which is definitely spiritual, it reacts upon the artist and drags him into the muck and mire of perverted things. God hath made everything beautiful in its time; and woe betide the soul that despoils anything of its divine beauty! If the doom of all things is to be beautiful, like Marpessa, then the duty of human beings is to look through the windows of the beautiful upon the realities of eternity. Thus art itself must either be a servant of righteousness or an instrument of degradation. The same is true, also, of knowledge, which is one of the higher forms of power. But what man ever stored his brain-cells with knowledge and experienced peace and contentment? "He that increaseth knowledge increaseth sorrow," said a very wise man; and have not his sorrowful descendants been like the sands of the sea for number? Lord Guthrie thinks that Carlyle's beliefs "differentiated him from most of his familiars and from many of his disciples." When one of the latter sent him a volume of Voltaire, Carlyle remarked: "Think of them sending to an old man of seventy-five a book in which God is spelt with a small *g!*" Many a dirt philosopher displays ample knowl-

edge with a modicum of wisdom. Hunger and thirst after property, art, knowledge, or anything else, divorced from the wisdom which cometh down from above, is a form of foolishness fraught with untold injury and wickedness.

Now, just because man is a being of passionate hungers and burning thirsts, the good God has made abundant provision for their complete satisfaction. God nourishes His souls upon the bread and drink of righteousness. "And what is this righteousness?" you ask. Well, the word, like the reality for which it stands, has a history. It is so thoroughly ingrained in the ancient Hebrew religion that Matthew Arnold held that righteousness is the great generalization of the Old Testament. There it is, surely—in covenant, in law, in promise, in prophet, and in psalm. It signifies that which is normal, just, right, ethical ideals expressed in ethical action, and in ceremonialism. With the coming of God in Christ, however, righteousness becomes a larger, grander truth than ever. Our Lord makes love the essence of righteousness, grounded in the character of God, as that character is revealed through God's Christ. And what is the result? Why, righteousness is no longer conceivable apart from personality. Type, symbol, covenant, law, promise—all are gathered up into God in Christ, so that the truth in things is embodied, enfleshed in the truth, who is a Person. Righteousness, then, is the human personality taken into the personality of God in Christ, and thereby—and only

thereby—comes to self-realization. Saint Paul has given classic expression to this conception of righteousness, his experience giving birth to the expression: "I myself might have confidence in the flesh: if any other man thinketh to have confidence in the flesh, I yet more: circumcised the eighth day, of the stock of Israel, of the tribe of Benjamin, a Hebrew of Hebrews; as touching the law, a pharisee; as touching zeal, persecuting the church; as touching the righteousness which is in the law, found blameless. Howbeit, what things were gain to me, these have I counted loss for Christ. Yea verily, and I count all things to be loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord: for whom I suffered the loss of all things, and do count them but refuse, that I may gain Christ, and be found in Him, not having a righteousness of mine own, even that which is of the law, but that which is through faith in Christ, the righteousness which is from God by faith: so that I may know Him, and the power of His resurrection, and the fellowship of His sufferings, becoming conformed unto His death; if by any means I may attain unto the resurrection from the dead. Not that I have already obtained, or am already made perfect: but I press on, if so be that I may lay hold on that for which also I was laid hold on by Christ Jesus. Brethren, I count not myself yet to have laid hold: but one thing I do, forgetting the things which are behind, and stretching forward to the things which are before, I press on toward the

goal unto the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus." What is this but the speech of a human, weighted down with ceremonialism and meatless abstraction, suddenly picked up by One who runs and is never weary, and is thrust headlong and souldeep into the brimming fountains of eternal joy!

III

"For they shall be filled." They—the Greek sets the emphasis upon that word—they who hunger and thirst after this personal righteousness in this One Righteous Person, shall be filled. Always pursuing, yet always attaining; always hungry, yet always fed; always thirsting, yet always drinking—that is God's immortal program for immortal souls. On the Christian tombs in the Catacombs, the first sign of Christian life, according to Dean Stanley, is pictured by a stag drinking eagerly at the silver stream. But better than any symbol is the soul that carries within that artesian well of which the Saviour says: "Whosoever drinketh of the water that I shall give him shall never thirst; but the water that I shall give him shall become in him a well of water springing up unto eternal life."

Besides laying emphasis upon the persons in whom the beatitude finds fulfillment, there is the question: "When?" As already hinted, both here and yonder. It were foolish to think that, in such a vast enterprise, a few whirling years of earth would be sufficient either for the com-

pletion of our work or the final enrichment of our powers. The rivers of God cannot be drunk dry in a day. The deeps of personality cannot be exhausted in a night. Life's unsung songs cannot be rendered to harps whose strings are momentarily breaking. When did the whole summer get fenced within a single garden? When did all the stars get reflected in one pool? When did the carols of all the birds come full-throated from one tree? Answer me these questions, and I will answer you the Christian's question as to the time of his nature's total fulfillment. It is enough to say that, when your body weds the dust, you will go journeying gloriously on, hungry nevermore, nor thirsty, nor tired, nor tear-stained. A boy asked his father: "Why do good souls go away and leave us, father?" What a question! We could get on wondrously well without bad souls, but why do good souls go away and leave us? "I will tell you, my son," said the father. "In the first place, they outgrow the world. They need more room in which to unfold their powers. And then, in the second place, the genius of Heaven is this: While Heaven is perfect, yet Heaven can always stand a little more perfecting. So I think one of the beautiful things about Heaven is in the truth that, while it is ravishingly complete, Heaven is never entirely finished. Thus lovely souls go away and leave us, my child, because that Dear Other Place is so dear that it needs more loveliness."

XI

LIFE'S REHEARSAL*

"And they rehearsed the things that happened in the way."
—St. Luke xxiv. 35.

THERE is a certain disadvantage, one sometimes feels, in the way we commemorate our Christian Easter. Whether under the spell of mechanical routine or other causes, many persons seriously dwell upon the fact of the Risen Christ only one day during the whole year. On Easter alone does the glory, the wonder, the awe of it all seem to dawn upon them. It is better, of course, to feel the thrill of the Glorified once a year than never to feel Him at all. Yet, this attitude is so pathetically short of the meaning of Christ's victory over death and the grave, that it is quite unworthy of Christian people. The human mind is offered, for study and improvement, no object or fact of such majesty and exaltation as the glorified body of our Lord and Saviour. It is the very brightness of Heaven shining down upon the enshadowed paths of earth; it gathers up into itself all the beauties of the universe and concentrates them in this dazzling and surpassing Form, impossible to be

*Preached in the Fifth Avenue Presbyterian Church, New York, May 14, 1919.

holden of death. Borrow all the tints of all the skies, and all the colors of all the flowers, and all the lusters of all the gems, and all the white of all the snows, and all the green of all the trees, and all the refinements of all matter known and unknown, then blend them into one blaze of beauty, and you have a hint of the glory of Christ's resurrection body. Wherefore, the Risen One ought not to be considered only one day in the church year; for He is the source of the mind's perpetual amazement and deepening adoration.

A larger measure of this inspiring practice, I am sure, will equip us for the tasks of today. Like the two disciples going to Emmaus, we shall be continuously caught up into the Immortal Presence and enkindled by lights and heats and warmths that bravely defy the winds and winters and storms blowing across the world. The text pictures them in a compelling moment. Agitated and awed, they do not linger in the village after the Master's self-disclosure and sudden disappearance. They hasten to Jerusalem, seek the eleven and others gathered with them, and declare: "The Lord is risen indeed, and hath appeared unto Simon." Then comes my text, one of those stirring notes throbbing out from the New Testament orchestra: "And they rehearsed the things that happened in the way." Now it is a great thing to see the end from the beginning —so great, indeed, that God alone can do it. "I am God," He says in Isaiah, "and there is none

like Me, declaring the end from the beginning." It may be profitable, however, for us to sometimes think of the beginning from the end, even as these two sorely distressed disciples did. If it is good to take long forward looks, as sages and prophets and teachers have ever done, I think it cannot be altogether ill to take vast backward glimpses. It lends to life, as a whole, a certain magnificence and symmetry which the details and distractions of the present are unable to completely disturb. In life's rehearsal—at the end of the road—many things are made plain, many dark problems are tenderly irradiated; for the soft light of the eventide is more kindly than the blinding brilliance of the noonday.

I

Looking back upon their journey, what was the subject of their conversation? What were they discussing in the end of that troubled and chaotic day? The answer is at hand. Mysteriously joining them in the way, the Master asks: "What communications are these that ye have one with another, as ye walk?" Cleopas asks, in reply, if He is living alone in Jerusalem—if He is so shut off from the current of life that He is unaware of the things which are come to pass there in these days? "What things?" He asks. They answer: "The things concerning Jesus the Nazarene."

Here, then, is the subject in life's rehearsal: Jesus of Nazareth, the Messiah, the Word made

flesh, the Son of Man, the Son of God! He is a cosmic theme. The universe is under obligations to interpret Him. Matter, of course, is not consciously serving Him, but He is consciously making matter, force, and mind serve His ends—that is the important thing. Charles Kingsley said that evolution is just God's way of making things make themselves. God in Christ thinks, and universes are conceived; He speaks, and systems are created; He wills, and worlds obey. Verily, the things concerning Jesus the Nazarene compel us to consider the original and ultimate things—atoms in their microscopic galaxies, stars in their orbital immensities, suns in their rising and setting, seasons in their scheduled returns, angels in their unceasing ministries, men in their birth, being, and destiny, nations in their rise and fall. We shall never have done with Jesus the Nazarene. We might as well try to ignore gravity, heat, and light as to ignore Him. He is on our hands—the Eternal God venturing down the ways of time and sense. And we are on His hands—let us be profoundly grateful that we are! Before all things, He is the beginning of all things, the center of all things, the goal of all things. All things are held together by this glorified, wounded God, who walked with Cleopas and his anonymous friend in the twilighttide of that first Easter day.

Is it not rather touching, therefore, to observe the progressive backward movement of those brilliantly belated persons who place Jesus in mere

human categories? They say He is *one* of the prophets and leaders of the race. If that is true, Paul and Augustine and Luther and Wesley and Beecher and Brooks and Bushnell, together with multiplied millions, yourselves included, are idolators. Idolatry is the worship of anything which is not God or the worship of false gods. So, if Jesus is a mere man, write yourselves down as being constantly guilty of the sin of idolatry. *One* of the leaders of the race? Perhaps emphasis is laid upon the *one* that the concept of unity may be preserved from violence! But this attempt to sandwich the Name that is above every name in among Socrates, Buddha, St. Francis, Wesley, Lincoln, and Emerson is at once old, stupid, and in exceedingly bad taste. How old is it? As old as the scribes, pharisees, and chief priests. Why, humanly speaking, was Jesus crucified? Jesus was crucified because He was accused of making Himself equal to God; they said that He blasphemed the name and nature of Jehovah; therefore, He was sentenced to a felon's death. How stupid is it? Just as stupid as it is possible for a certain type of mind to be brilliant, and at the same time mis-see, mis-think, and mis-interpret. In other words, the spiritual stupidity is proportioned to the intellectual brilliance; it is beset by religious dullness while it is agitated by a kind of mental vigor; it speaks much of wise liberalism while condemning itself to arrogant narrowness. The mind that discerns no difference in Christ and Socrates is a mind lack-

ing in the finer powers of discrimination; it does not know how to distinguish things that differ. It subscribes to its own confession of inability in the higher perceptions and intellections. "I am very clever in many things," it says. "I am educated—I know languages, history, literature, philosophy, and science. I am a keen thinker, and a clever speaker. I am abreast of the times, an apostle of human betterment, interested in national and international movements. Yet I must confess—and I do so without shame because I am ignorant of my own stupidity—that in judging matters of supreme moment, I am hopelessly deficient. That is why I pronounce the name of Jesus and Socrates and Kant and Lincoln all in the same breath. I am too dull to see any difference whatsoever."

However, I have a profound conviction that undue advantage is being taken of these noble servants of God in miscellaneously grouping their names with the Lord of Glory. I think, for example, if John Wesley were back in the flesh and he heard someone attempting to rank him with Christ, he would instantly lay hold of a large whip, wrought of stinging cords of righteous indignation, and scourge that person from his presence. And is not the exceeding bad taste of it all patent enough? No man likes to have the face of his mother framed and set in a company of questionable characters. Yet the distance between the Christ of God and the purest saint that ever lived is so great that the canons

of good taste forbid placing them together, so far as their office, nature, and character are concerned. Furthermore, the question of worthful judgment-values is involved in all such thinking and speaking. If I do not know the difference between Raphael's "The Transfiguration" and a newspaper cartoon, is my artistic taste of great value? If I do not know the difference between Handel's "Messiah" and a street ditty, is my musical taste a thing to be prized? If I do not know the difference between Demosthenes' "Oration on the Crown" and the stump speech of a political partisan, is my oratorical taste a subject of serious concern? Very well: If I do not know the difference between Jesus of Nazareth, the Sent of God, the Saviour of the world, and the men He died to save and rose again to justify, what, after all, are my religious appraisals worth? Judged by the laws of common sense only, to say nothing of the spiritual verities that are eternal, such evaluations are necessarily inadequate, incompetent, and, finally, inconsequential. As Christian judgments, they are simply invalid; they do not apply. "To whom will ye liken Me, and make Me equal, and compare Me, that we may be like?" was the challenge of Jehovah, as voiced by Isaiah. Centuries later a yearning human soul longs for a vision of this same Jehovah-Father. "Lord, show us the Father," cried Philip, "and it sufficeth us." Then did that Upper Room glow with more than apoc-

simple splendor when Jesus said: "He that hath seen Me hath seen the Father."

Meanwhile there are some exceedingly suggestive words in the golden history for all who journey on to the City of Illumination: "And it came to pass, while they communed and questioned together, that Jesus Himself drew near, and went with them." How many millions of times has the story been repeated! How constantly is the reality repeated in the lives of multitudes to-day! We commune and question, and lo! Jesus Himself draws near and goes with us on our pilgrim ways. We toil, and He is the strength of our labor. We laugh, and He is the source of our happiness. We weep, and He is the rainbow of our tears. We love, and He is the fountain-spring and lord's without forever. We suffer, and He is the Physician that heareth us. We die, and He is death's universally repeating promise to eternal life. Our Lord is not a distant friend, but a present Part; not an influence, but a Person; not a philosophic reminiscence, but a redeeming Life. Tennyson has our sweet Quaker poetess *in* sung the truth:

> "We need not climb the heavenly steep
> To bring the Lord Christ down;
> We need not search the ocean deep
> For Him we seek to crown.
>
> . . . . . .
>
> "But nearer, nearer than any set
> A present help is He;
> And best thought we have met
> Shall be the best we see.

"The healing of His seamless dress
Is by our beds of pain;
We touch Him in life's throng and press,
And we are whole again."

"And they rehearsed the things that happened in the way"; the subject of their rehearsal was the Saviour of mankind; and He will continue to be the subject of man's thought and adoration for time and eternity. The mystery of mysteries to the religious dilettante, He is the light of life to the trusting, serving, sacrificial soul.

II

The mood in life's rehearsal—that is another thought which looms large in this backward glimpse from the goal to the beginning. Considering the mood of these two companions, I think it is a most natural and human mood—a mood alternating between hope and despair. "We had hoped that it was He who should redeem Israel." Then the speaker recounts the three days' anxiety, the amazement occasioned by the women's report of a vision of angels, the verification of what they had said by other members of their company. "We had hoped"—and hope's temperature is variable, a rising and falling condition in human life.

Do we not know a kindred mood in our outlook upon the world today? "We had hoped"—and the words are spoken in whispered tones—"that Christ had redeemed the world from war. We

had hoped that brotherhood and reason and justice had at last gotten the upper hand among the nations. But oh! the agony, the crime, the wickedness!" Now what is the answer to such a mood—not the answer of mere words, but of unvarnished reality? In the first place, the hope of Christ's saviourhood has never been seriously considered in its national and international aspects. Even the most civilized nations are scarcely more than painted paganisms. "And is that," you ask, "the result of twenty centuries of Christianity?" In God's name, No! It is the result of twenty centuries of individual and international refusal to accept Christ's rule of life; it is the result of secret treaties, national pride and selfishness, aided and abetted by wicked political charlatans from the Rhine, the Volga, the Tiber, the Seine, the Thames, and the Potomac. And even now, with the world built by godless ingenuity laid in dust and ashes, partisan political tricksters are determined to erect another international slaughter-house, fashioned after the same Christless dimensions, upon the accusing ruins of that blasted world of jealousy and hate and greed. And yet we label some of these creatures statesmen! God have mercy upon us, as He can, in justice and truth, have no mercy upon these wickedly blind clansmen in quest of political hire! They would wantonly sacrifice unborn generations to forward individual and political ends, by every word and act declaring that they are determined to trample Christ's laws of right

in the mire, if by any means they can compass the downfall of persons, regardless of the issues of Christian righteousness. And He that sitteth in the Heavens is laughing at their machinations! What, think you, does the God of the Universe care for Conservative or Liberal, Socialist or Anarchist, Democrat or Republican, if they are not instruments of truth? I will tell you precisely how much He cares: God cares just enough for them to see that they work their own destruction, then to save out of their meanness all unintended but usable good, and then He drops them into the gulfs of oblivion! "We had hoped that it was He who should redeem" the nations. Yes; but how deep was our hope? And how far were we willing to apply that hope to practical issues? Such questions, if we have not lost the power to blush, cause us to hang our heads in shame; for we have crucified the Son of God afresh.

There is another answer that sheds light upon this alternate mood of hope and despair. It is God's opposition to the world's idea of the purpose and meaning of life. What is the predominant motive that drives the nations onward and, in the light of the Great War, downward to death and destruction? That purpose is gathered up and expressed in the general idea of civilization. It runs something like this: Men are to be educated; they are to have plenty to eat and plenty to wear; they are to use physical forces and physical things for their physical pleasures; they are part of a universally evolving scheme, and

the scheme will finally evolve them all alike into everlasting bliss or everlasting nothingness. And God's purpose is organized into a deathless opposition to the world's purpose; He is everlastingly disputing its worth and validity and He is immovably determined to effect its overthrow. God's aim is to produce Christlike character in men and women. He could not be God and have a smaller aim. And that aim is so precious, so all-important, so white-hot in the heart of God, that nothing can stand before it. If civilization gets in its way, civilization is overturned, ground to powder, and begun anew; if ease and comfort contest its supremacy, they are destroyed by their own lotus-eating and idleness; if pride swaggers into its presence, just one glance from the eye of divine humility, and lo! pride is immediately thrust back upon its gilded dunghill; if militarism goes forth to conquer meekness, meekness arms itself with earthquakes and lightnings and deadly atmospheres and smites the horrid thing into the dust. O believe me, nothing can withstand this divine intention at the heart of things. God will create and destroy worlds and nations and individuals rather than have His purpose of growing Christlike men and women unrealized!

Furthermore, do we not have this perplexing mood reflected in the experience of the individual? "We had hoped," so we say, "that at least the righteous man would be free of sorrow and suffering. We know that it is natural for the bad man to reap a bad harvest; but why should

the good man be plunged into the fiery vats of pain?" The problem is as old as Job and as new and acute as the last pain that smites the patient sufferer. How shall we answer such a bewildering question? To undertake a complete answer would be to advertise one's ignorance as well as to emphasize his inability to appreciate a profound problem. Yet there are bright lights burning amidst even this darkness. Ask the ages, and they will tell you that the supreme characters are wrought out in seething flame. If the centuries are so unanimous on this point, then the thing itself, the fact, the idea at the root of it all, can be neither incidental nor accidental. There must be some deep, wise thought behind. What is it? Evidently this: God could not make a world without pain—though there is yet to be a painless universe; the Christ Himself, though He was a Son, yet learned obedience by the things which He suffered; and next to the Lord Himself, the most beautiful creature in the universe is a patiently pain-wrought human. I have a very dear friend—one of the dearest a man ever had. From childhood to his more than threescore and ten years, his has been a singularly Christ-led life. Now, at the end of his career, he is the victim of a most terrible malady. Being blown to pieces, drowned in the depths of the sea, crushed by pitiless wheels—why these instantaneous deaths, in comparison, are to be coveted; to die in an instant is a luxury measured by a tortured living death, extending over weeks and months.

Going into his presence, that old question "Why?" simply will not down. I know many at whose bodily sufferings one would not be surprised. But the awful agony of this saint of God —why and wherefore? Well, I received a partial answer to my hard question the other day. For more than fifty years a noble woman has walked by his side. She says that, after he comes out of his throes of pain, so awful that reason passes into eclipse for the time being, he asks: "Did I complain, dear? You know I have so much to be thankful for!" That is faith-inspired, Christ-created, and Calvary-forgiven life breaking into self-expression. It is, I verily believe, the divinest, the sublimest creation among all the wondrous works of God. Stars are as nothing to it; they lack intelligence. Mountains are leveled before it; they lack feeling. Oceans cannot be weighed in the same balance; they are devoid of will. Silent are music and eloquence in its holy presence; and, if perchance, their silence is broken, it is only that they may attain their highest expression in celebrating the unutterable radiance and dignity of such a life. This is indeed the victory that overcomes the world—the world of pain, of mystery, of sin, of death—and places the diadem of glory and goodness upon the crowned souls of God in Christ. "They rehearsed the things that happened in the way." We, too, seeing the beginning from the end, shall sometime, somewhere, rehearse the experiences of our pilgrimage. Among them, I doubt not, shall be

this matter of our moods that alternated between hope and despair.

III

The Celestial Interpreter—that is another truth the two friends must have rehearsed at the end of their journey. Unannounced, He became one of them, threw a mystic spell of sympathy about them, drew a full confession out of their sorrowful souls, and then poured the light of eternity into them. Consider the Master's method—the threefold manner in which He disclosed His interpreting insight. There is, first, the exclamation: "O foolish men, and slow of heart to believe in all that the prophets have spoken!" Because of their meaning and rarity, our Lord's exclamations have a kind of reverberant Niagara roar: they will sound on to time's utmost distances. And this is one of them. "O foolish men!" Do I not know at least one of these men? Assuredly I do! Nor do I have to ask my next-door neighbour about him; he dwells under the same layer of epidermis as myself; he breathes through the same nostrils and speaks with the same tongue. And then his slowness to believe—not the untrue, the ignoble, the unbeautiful. Never! He is amazingly keen on all these. But his slowness to accept the divine, the permanent, the prophet-things—O, his backwardness here is enough to make the angels weep! Also, he is dialetically strong in proving that the universe made itself, though science and experience

convince him that there could not be a self-made match-head in countless millions of years. Very much alive to the absolute impossibilities, he is conspicuously dead to the raptures of the undying. Poignantly eager to lay hold of every vapid, obsolete "ism" issuing forth from commercially quackish brains, he is surprisingly timid in believing that "God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth on Him should not perish, but have eternal life." May God cure us of our spiritual dullness! May we have less alertness in accepting the untrue and more swiftness in grasping the prophetic realities—the things upon which the Throne of God rests forevermore!

Following the deafening exclamation, comes that abysmal interrogation—grander than God's questions to Job out of the whirlwind: "Behooved it not the Christ to suffer these things, and to enter into His glory?" What is the Christ's glory? To Hebraistically and Hellenistically sit upon the circle of the heavens, eternally young, heartlessly impassive, heedless of souls that shrivel in the fires of sin and ignorance? "O foolish men," He answers, "I tell you nay! Christ's glory is to empty Himself, lay aside the prerogatives of Deity. In place of omnipotence, He asks for an infant's weakness; yea, more: He descends not only into the human but into the sub-human lot, being born in a manger. He who made the stars learns to make yokes for oxen. He who stretched out the heavens is

more homeless than birds and foxes. He whose eyes is too pure to behold iniquity, even He identifies Himself with human sin, and to cleanse the universe of that perilous stuff, He becomes obedient even unto death, yea, the death of the Cross." To really have Christ's conception of Christ's glory, the uttermost reach of all imaginable glory, and then to have that conception operative in the mind, the will, the imagination —that is indeed the greatest blessing the human soul can contain!

At last comes the Interpreter's interpretation: "And beginning from Moses and from all the prophets, He interpreted to them in all the Scriptures the things concerning Himself." In other words, the New Testament Christ is just the Old Testament Jehovah in lineaments of flesh and blood. The Illimitable has limited Himself within space and time and humanity. Christ has humanized the Everlasting God. We build our hope on that, and that alone; all else is dust and ashes. Without this, the universe is a gigantic nightmare materialized, agelessly moaning through its atoms and constellations. With it, the worlds are golden with melody, life is aglow with immeasurable meaning, and death is the soul's swan-song upon the shores of Time as it goes tunefully forth to add another note to the chant of the redeemed in the City of Light by the Sea of Crystal. "And He showed me a river of water of life, bright as crystal, proceeding out of the throne of God and of the Lamb, in the midst

of the street thereof. And on this side of the river and on that was the tree of life, bearing twelve crops of fruits, yielding its fruits every month: and the leaves of the tree were for the healing of the nations. And there shall be no curse any more: and the throne of God and of the Lamb shall be therein: and His servants shall serve Him; and they shall see His face; and His Name shall be on their foreheads. And there shall be night no more and they need no light of lamp, neither light of sun; for the Lord God shall give them light: and they shall reign forever and ever."

But we are not arrived thither yet. We are still in the City of Mansoul and the Country of Diabolus. There is yet many a tear to be shed, many a heartbreak to be experienced, many a temptation to be overcome, many a faithful day's work to be done. How shall we meet and conquer every foe? By serving the Lord Christ, by trusting Him absolutely, by leaning hard upon Him. Take a hint from the loving wisdom of that young girl won to Christ out of heathenism. In addition to the usual handicaps, a missionary found it most trying to sit upon the floor and teach her class, gathered around her in oriental fashion. The sitting posture made her back unbearably tired. But one of her scholars, with love-illumined eyes, grasped the situation and volunteered to help her teacher. She offered to place her back against the back of the missionary. Fearing that the teacher was not taking

full advantage of her proffered service, the girl kept whispering: "O Missionary, if you love me, lean hard." It is what our Lord would whisper to us. "If you love Me, O child of Mine," He keeps calling, "lean hard. For the Eternal God is thy refuge, and underneath are the Everlasting Arms."

"Child of My love, lean hard,
And let Me feel the pressure of thy care.
I know thy burden, child, I shaped it;
Poised it in Mine own hand: made no proportion
In its weight to thine unaided strength;
For even as I laid it on, I said:
'I shall be near, and while she leans on Me,
This burden shall be Mine, not her's;
So shall I keep My child within the circling arms
Of Mine own love.' Here lay it down, nor fear
To impose it on a shoulder which upholds
The government of worlds. Yet closer come:
Thou art not near enough: I would embrace thy care,
So I might feel My child reposing on My breast.
Thou lovest Me! I knew it. Doubt not then;
But loving Me, lean hard."